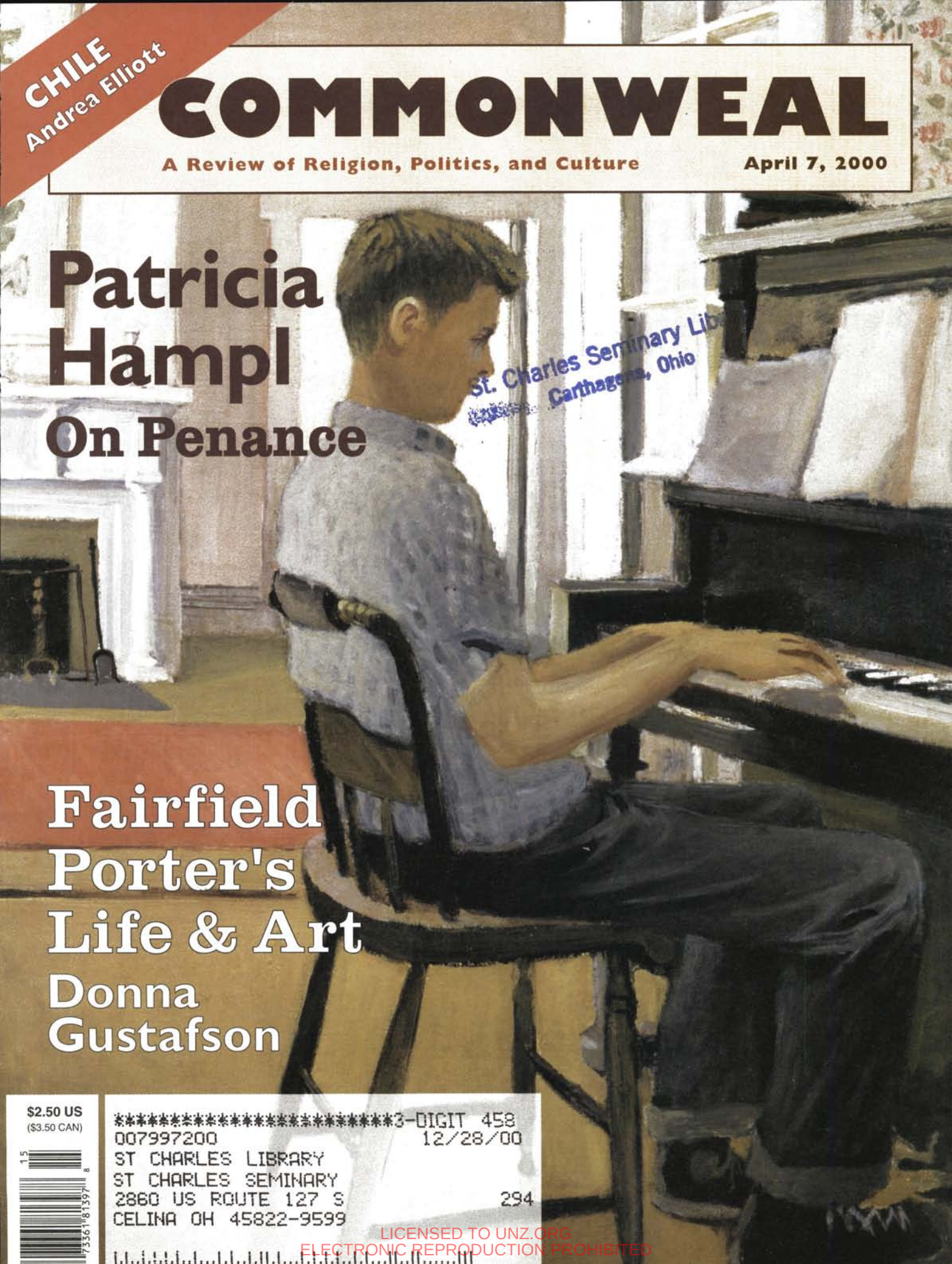

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COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

April 7, 2000

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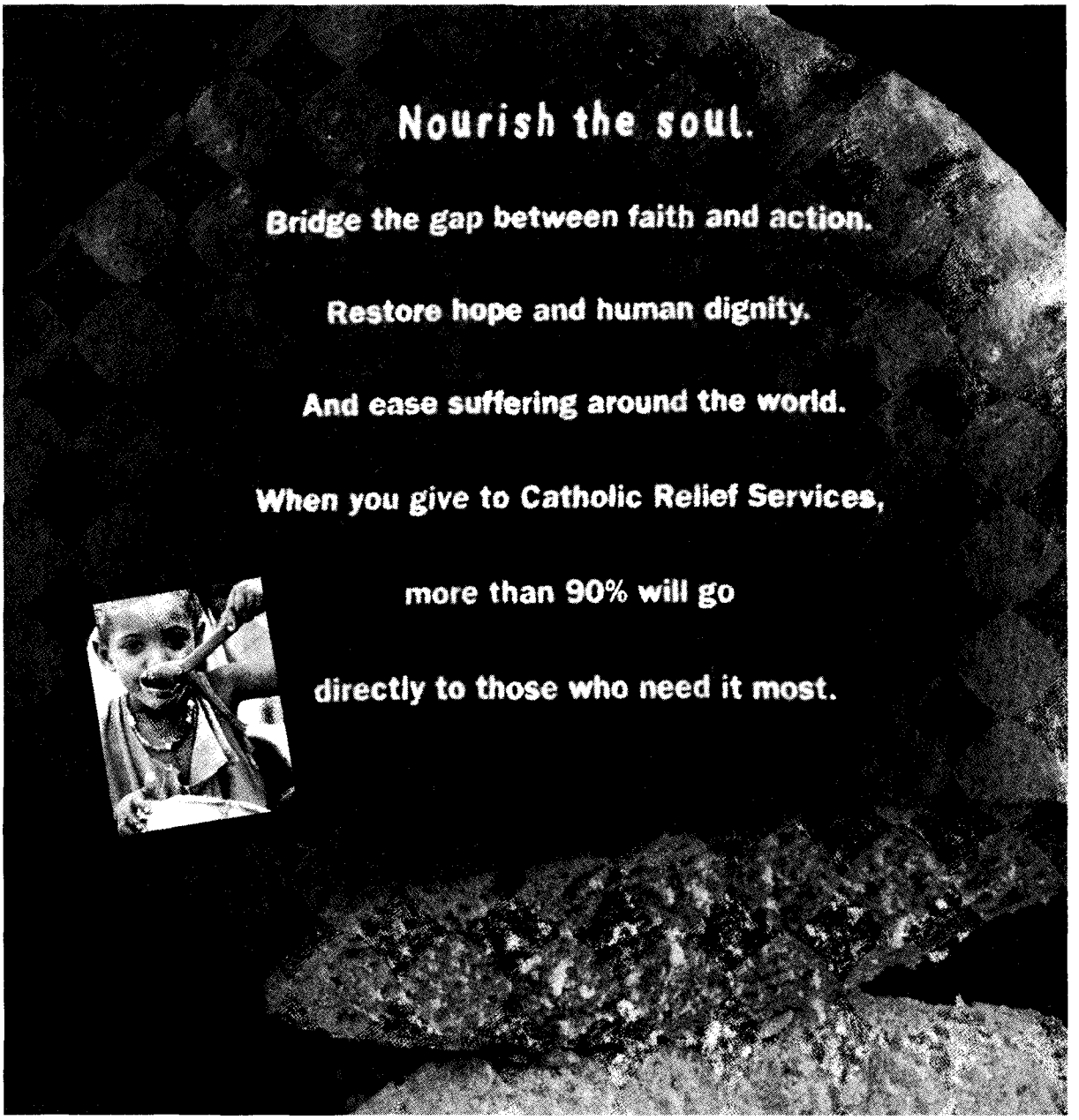

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COMMONWEAL

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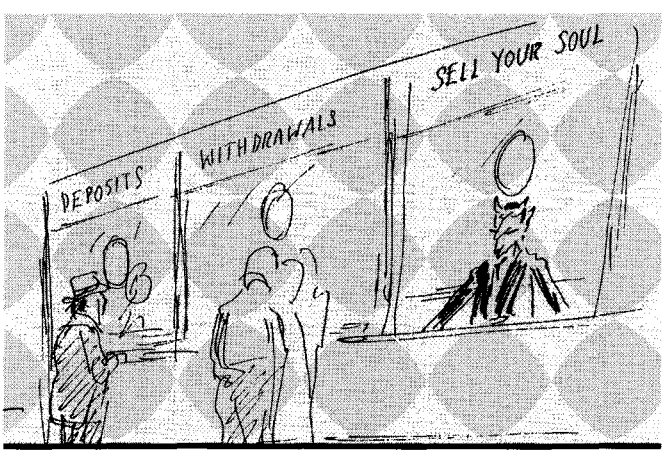

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To the Editors

Theology of nature

John Garvey ["God and the Big Bang," March 10] rightly contends that theology should not make itself dependent upon any particular set of scientific ideas. However, it is helpful to distinguish between the way *natural theology* (arguing from features of nature to God's existence) depends on science from the way in which a *theology of nature* relates to science.

Natural theology has always been a precarious venture, even more so since the rise of science. To base one's religious faith upon particular scientific ideas is never prudent. On the other hand, a theology of nature, such as, a theology of evolution, does not similarly place at risk the fundamental teaching of a religious tradition. Instead, it speculates on what the latter might mean in the context of new scientific ideas.

In the case of evolution, for example, the theologian is not putting fundamental religious beliefs in jeopardy by searching for a possible *consonance* between Darwinian evolution and Christian images of God. At a time when many evolutionary biologists consider religion and science completely incompatible it seems irresponsible not to attempt to show how they can be fit together coherently. If a theology of nature fails to do this well, then it can start all over. Nothing central to one's faith is lost in the attempt. But not to try at all is to commit the modern anthropocentric theological mistake of removing the natural world from the horizon of faith altogether.

JOHN F. HAUGHT
Washington, D.C.

The writer is professor of theology at Georgetown University.

Why things exist

As a final (whom am I kidding?) comment on the recent spate of articles and letters on evolution "by chance" or "by intelligent design," let me point out two things. One, so called "blind chance" has its own laws and regularities (and therefore predictabilities); witness probability theory, statistics, etc. And two, much of the time we use terms describing our human ways of knowing and thinking as if they could be predicated of God univocally, instead of only analogously. While we humans are constrained to choose one or the other of opposites, in God contraries (though not contradictories, which are something else again) *can* coexist; for example, infinite mercy with infinite justice, or chance with intelligent design, for that matter. So, while we may have difficulty reconciling these seemingly exclusive ideas, in reality they could coexist.

The bottom line is we created intellects come to know things because they exist. But with God it is the other way around: God does not know things because they exist; rather, things exist because God knows—correction: *actively thinks*—them as *existing*.

EDMUND F. KAL
Fresno, Calif.

Twains meet

Joan of Arc, as Mary Gordon's "Desperately Seeking Joan" [March 10] points out, has and will continue to astound and inspire those not yet banalized and drugged by our reductive culture. Indeed, she should. As Louis Kossuth observed, "Joan of Arc is the only person of either sex who has ever held supreme command of the military forces of a nation *at the age of seventeen*."

But more important, none other than the great American writer Mark Twain loved Joan. According to Andrew Tadie, Twain loved his *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* more than any of his other books. Moreover, Twain dedicated the book to his wife Olivia (the only book he ever dedicated to her) on the occasion of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. For Twain, the rugged Yankee skeptic, Joan was the sole exception in humanity that challenged his pessimistic, deterministic view of history (only his fictional characters of Huck and Jim embodied her spirit of nobility, truth, and goodness). She lived freedom in its truest sense. We would call it grace, not part of Twain's vocabulary, but nonetheless he saw it lived in her. Thus, whether he liked it or not he wasn't an absolute pessimist!

It is worth noting two other facts concerning Joan. The transcripts of her trial and of her rehabilitation a quarter of a century later (ordered by Pope Calixtus III) are the first extant complete court records in history. Also, the late Cardinal John Wright, who had a lifelong scholarly interest in Joan, bequeathed his over five-thousand-book library on Joan to the Boston Public Library, where, as a young boy, he worked as a page and learned to love books.

Rumor has it that Ken Burns is working on a PBS documentary on Joan of Arc. I hope he has read Twain.

GEOFFREY B. GNEUHS
New York, N.Y.

Hillenbrand

The articles on Reynold Hillenbrand [March 10] brought back two clear memories of my experiences with the man. In the mid- and late-1960s, I was a graduate student in Chicago and had daily contact with two "Hillenbrand men," Monsignor John Egan and Father Bill Clark (my pastor). I admired both men and wanted to meet the famous "Hillenbrand" who influenced them so deeply.

I contacted Hillenbrand and asked to interview him for a graduate paper on "social active priests" in Chicago. He agreed and I spent two hours with him. One of his remarks still stands out clearly: In the early 1930s, he was writing his doctoral dissertation on the concept of the Mystical Body in Saint Thomas Aquinas and

(Continued on page 29)

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A pilgrim's progress

A biblical flood of ink has been spilled trying to assess the significance of John Paul II's recent actions. During Mass on the first Sunday of Lent, the pope made an unprecedented apology for the historical sins committed by Catholics. He asked God's forgiveness for sins against the unity of Christianity, against women, against the people of Israel, and for the use of violence in the "service of truth," by which he meant the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the conquest of the New World. The sinners implicated included those who acted in the church's name. Nine days later, John Paul began a dramatic weeklong pilgrimage to Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories. Deftly balancing the religious and political ramifications of his visit, he impressed Israelis and Palestinians with the sincerity of his good will, while giving hope and affirmation to those in the occupied territories by voicing support for a Palestinian homeland. For Catholics, the pope's pilgrimage emphasized again the moral and religious importance John Paul places on reconciliation with Jews, whose covenant with God abides. Taking that work of reconciliation to the Holy Land and to the reconstituted nation of Israel obviously had profound meaning for John Paul. But above all, the pope went to where the story of the New Testament unfolds so that his every action could be placed in the context of his faith that "God's interventions...culminate in the mysteries of the Incarnation, and the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ."

For the most part, both the pope's effort to direct the church's attention to the failures of the past, and his much anticipated Jubilee Year visit to the Holy Land, were well received. Some complained that he failed explicitly to criticize Pius XII's conduct during the Holocaust or to apologize to Muslims for the Crusades. Others found it hard to make much sense of the pope's religious vision at all. The *New York Times* editorial page, for example, achieved an almost parodic effect by complaining that the papal apology should have extended to the church's opposition to abortion, contraception, the ordination of women, and homosexuality. Divorce and shopping on Sunday were inexplicably left off this wish list.

As the trip to Israel reminded us, the nearly eighty-year-old pontiff can still enthrall an audience. In private, he continues to win over all comers with his personal sanctity and human warmth. Although hobbled by ill health, John Paul is determined to show both the church and the world what it means to live the gospel. Nothing demonstrated that fact more poignantly that the pope's humble and obviously heartfelt expressions of grief at Yad Vashem, the stark Israeli memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Televised live throughout Israel, the pope's brief words of lament followed by a long meditative silence left an indelible impression on a nation that is not easily impressed. As the Israeli novelist David Grossman commented: "It is good that the pope did not ask for forgiveness. No one can ask for forgiveness for the Holocaust in the name of others, and no one is entitled to forgive in the name of the victims. But the pope's presence at Yad Vashem, inside the deepest dimensions of Jewish suffering, and the acts that he performed, personally as a man, resonate far more strongly than could any official declaration."

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John Paul's decades of patient work for reconciliation between Catholics and Jews has advanced the church on a course that was institutionally and doctrinally unimaginable even forty years ago. A master of the symbolic gesture, the pope's willingness to display a contrite heart and a palpable love of God may now help convince the Jewish community at large that profound changes have taken place in the church's teachings about Judaism. Those changes, as the pope's every gesture indicates, go to the core of what it means to be Catholic.

As for Catholics, something equally earthshaking may result from the pope's public admission that the sons and daughters of the church, including church leaders at all levels, have sinned grievously even when acting in the church's name. If representatives of the church have erred in the past, its current pastors can hardly be immune from error. Hoping to deflect that logical inference, the Vatican's International Theological Commission issued a turgid and equivocating explanation of why the papal apology neither specifically condemns Catholics who sinned in the past nor threatens the church's certainties about the unchanging nature of moral truth. In this sense, the Vatican wants to have it both ways, getting credit for admitting obvious error while not conceding any institutional flaws. But the act of apologizing itself, like John Paul's presence at Yad Vashem, may transcend such theological lawyering and inspire a profound re-evaluation of the way the church makes its claims about the truth it possesses. Such a prospect should not alarm Catholics. The holiness of the church is a mystery, not a seal of state to be stamped on every pronouncement from Rome. The truth of the gospel does not depend on the sinlessness or inerrancy of the church. In fact, as the pope's actions eloquently attest, the heart of the gospel compels us to admit sin, seek the forgiveness of God, and reconcile with those we have injured. Actions, as Jesus showed again and again, speak louder than words, and the pope's actions speak volumes for those with ears to hear.

Joan O'Gara ■ In February, Joan O'Gara, the wife of James O'Gara, who was *Commonweal*'s managing editor (1952–67) and then editor (1967–84), died at the Charlestown Retirement Community in Catonsville, Maryland. A long-time resident of Rockville Centre, New York, Joan was a native of Chicago. Born Joan Smith on November 10, 1920, she worked as executive secretary for Chicago Interstudent Catholic Action in 1937–47. During the O'Garas' many years in Rockville Centre, Joan was active with the Girl Scouts, various antipoverty agencies, and the RCIA program at Saint Agnes Cathedral. She is survived by her husband, her two daughters, Margaret and Monica, and two grandchildren. May she rest in peace.

ET CETERAS

Marquee changes ■ Despite our strenuous protests, Richard Alleva has decided to retire from the business of movie reviewing—at least for the foreseeable future (*see* "End of the Affair," page 19). As *Commonweal*'s movie critic for the past ten years, Richard has been, at least to our minds, one of the magazine's great strengths as well as one of the most perceptive reviewers to be found anywhere. We will miss him. Readers who share our chagrin at the breakup of what we imagined to be an indissoluble union should direct their letters of woe to Richard, for he seems utterly immune to our repeated pleas that he reconsider his decision.

Commonweal has reviewed movies since 1935, and will somehow continue to do so even without Richard's formidable pen at our disposal. Rand Richards Cooper, a novelist and essayist who has contributed to these pages for many years, will pick up the screen column for the immediate future. Other voices will also be called upon to fill in as the occasion merits it.

We wish Richard Alleva every good thing for his "sabbatical," which apparently includes a visit to England, among other cinematic adventures. His return to these pages is something we all look forward to.

Anti-Catholicism? ■ The Reverend Daniel Coughlin has been appointed chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives, the first Catholic priest to serve in that position. Father Coughlin's appointment comes after months of bitter controversy following House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert's (R–Ill.) decision to choose Charles Parker Wright, a Presbyterian minister, over another Catholic priest, the Reverend Timothy O'Brien. That initial decision made Hastert vulnerable to charges of anti-Catholicism, especially after George Bush's visit to Bob Jones University raised the specter of anti-Catholicism as an issue in the presidential race. Coughlin's appointment, after the gracious withdrawal of Reverend Wright, is an obvious effort by the Republicans to stanch the political bleeding.

There is no evidence that anti-Catholicism played a role in Hastert's rejection of Father O'Brien, but that did not stop Democrats from exploiting the issue or William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights from jumping into the fray feet first. When it comes to "defending the faith," the Catholic League usually shoots first and asks questions later. This time Catholic conservatives who have celebrated Donohue's tactics when employed against liberal targets took umbrage at his broadsides against Hastert. Evidently, the House chaplain fiasco threatened to undermine the political coalition being built between religiously conservative Catholics and evangelical Christians. Distinctions must be made! A fair-minded assessment of the facts is needed, cried conservative Catholics who suddenly found out what it is like being on the receiving end of Donohue's inflammatory allegations.

It is a temptation to take delight in seeing the tables turned on the self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, but we will not succumb to such anti-Catholic urgings.

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DANIEL CALLAHAN

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The war over genetically modified agriculture

Once again a genetics fight has broken out. Three years or so ago it was human cloning, next stem-cell research, and now it is genetically modified (G.M.) food. All of these struggles have a common thread: how should we respond to actual or potential genetic developments when the evidence for their benefit or harm is nonexistent or unclear? And once again, the United States has shown a far greater willingness to run the possible risks than, say, the Western European countries. Those countries were quick to ban cloning, and the enthusiasm about stem-cell research has been muted.

Their greatest hostility, however, has been reserved for G.M. food, subject to bans, boycotts, and public hostility, much to the dismay of American agribusiness and the Clinton administration. G.M. foods, especially soybeans and corn, are widely grown in the United States and are a major export product; the refusal of many countries to buy them is a significant threat to American agriculture.

No less important, American companies—particularly Monsanto—have been in the lead in developing pest-resistant plants by genetic modification and pesticides that will kill weeds but not food plants. They have been badly hurt by the growing international resistance, even if part of it has been their own fault. American biotechnology companies were fierce opponents of labeling G.M. products, arguing that, since there are no proven health threats, the public has no need to know about the genetic modifications. That stance was a political disaster, irritating the Europeans to the point of bans on the import of such foods. Monsanto's push for what they called a "terminator" seed—which once planted would not produce further seeds and thus threaten poor farmers who depend on gaining seed from their own crops for one generation of crops after another—was another political disaster.

The American companies have now relented. They have agreed to labeling, and Monsanto has terminated the "terminator" seeds. Yet they may have acted too late. While the Europeans have been vocal and effective in their opposition to G.M. food, it was hardly noticed in the United States until the past year. The debate in other countries, fed by the media and some serious food scares (such as mad-cow disease in Britain), has finally arrived here. A growing number of American high-class restaurants are refusing to serve any G.M. food, and various environmental groups have begun to target those foods for attack. The "organic" food movement, not much noticed in the recent past except in relatively upscale stores, has found a new momentum.

"My compliments to the genetic engineer."

Two serious problems persist, one bearing on the pertinent risk-benefit analysis, the other on the needs of developing countries. Not only is there little evidence either supporting or refuting the worry about long-term genetic harm, but it will also be hard to gain that knowledge in any quick or definitive way. Here and there can be found hints of possible harm, but that's about it. The only two ways to gain decisive knowledge would be careful field trials—expensive and time-consuming and not necessarily decisive for resolving safety debates—or simply plunging ahead and seeing what happens. For Europeans, what they call the "precautionary principle" has been influential: go slowly and be careful. The American style might be described as "go for it." The American style also has another feature of importance: it is far more valuable for farmers and agribusiness than for consumers, improving the productivity and profit of the former without corresponding benefits for the latter.

If that were the end of the story, G.M. food might just as well disappear with nobody much the worse for it. Hardly anyone seems to doubt that the Western developed countries could get along well without it. Yet there is a strong argument, advanced by the Rockefeller Foundation and others, that the developing countries have a serious need for G.M. food. Over the next twenty years or so, the world will add 1.5 billion people, and G.M. seeds, food, and other agricultural products offer the best way of feeding them. The Rockefeller Foundation brings some credibility to its contention. It led "the green revolution" in many developing countries through its research efforts, greatly increasing the yield of rice crops in particular. It now says a second revolution is needed, to raise the flagging yields from the first revolution

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and to increase the nutrient and vitamin content of various crops. Pest-resistant crops, pesticides that kill weeds but not food crops, and foods with enhanced nutrients would be a blessing if safely and equitably achieved.

To this contention there has been a response, mainly from the Left. For one thing, most malnutrition and starvation come from a maldistribution of food, not an absolute shortage. Corrupt political regimes, disorganization, and inequitable distribution underlie food shortages. For another, a reliance on G.M. food will put small farmers, responsible for local food needs, at the mercy of large multinational corporations, whose aim is profit and exportable cash crops rather than food for the poor. The potential ecological threat of G.M. crops enhances the opposition argument.

There is surely something to this response, but it rests on speculation no less than the sometimes overwrought claims about the likely bounty that G.M. food will bring. How should we proceed in the face of this uncertainty? My vote is for the precautionary principle but understood to include careful research and field trials of G.M. food. The Rockefeller Foundation is, moreover, working hard to overcome the patenting problems that give the large agribusiness companies their hold over G.M. It aims to negotiate free licensing agreements between those companies and developing countries, and that campaign has met with some success. If there is an appropriate bias here, it is that the benefit of any doubt, which there will always be, should be given to the needs of developing countries, and that means a careful pressing forward with G.M. food research. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

THE HIDDEN GOD

All-powerful, & vanquished

The rhetoric of some atheists and agnostics makes it appear that there is a fine line—if indeed there is any line at all—between religion and superstition. Religious people should be careful not to be too defensive about this, because it is often true. There is, in fact, a form of religion which is akin to carrying a lucky rabbit's foot or knocking on wood, and it is more pervasive in our churches than we want to acknowledge. You encounter it when people find themselves in some personal crisis and ask, "How could this happen to me? I have always gone to church, tried to live a Christian life..." as if we will be rewarded for such things. Life may be an automatic death sentence, but some of us are apparently supposed to get time off for good behavior.

You have to sympathize with people who ask this sort of naive question, because they are in real pain, and are genuinely baffled: the God who is supposed to make good things happen if you are nice isn't coming through. This has to be dealt with pastorally and sensitively, but it does confirm the agnostic view of religion as a crutch, a shield against the harsh realities of the world, a comforting illusion. The atheist or agnostic looks at people crowding their way toward the shrine at Guadalupe or venerating a wonderworking icon, and can't help contrasting this with a starving child, whose parents are no doubt praying for her survival as fervently as anyone ever prayed. It is easy to find something obscene in the idea that God arbitrarily rewards some while others suffer horribly. There is no comfort, or even any convincing answer, in the idea that God's ways are not our ways. That's true, in spades, but it is hardly an argument.

Part of the problem with any theodicy is the notion that God is powerful in the sense that we ordinarily give that word. Theodicy has been reduced to the formula, "If God is God he is not good; if God is good he is not God." God being God here means God being the one who makes everything happen the way it happens, God as the scene designer, playwright, director, puppetmaster. There is something of this picture of God in the Bible itself, but there are other strands there that also need attention. Christians too often see the revelation of Jesus Christ as something added to this picture of God as all-powerful (in the directorial sense mentioned above), and not as something that radically inverts and challenges it. Such attempts as process theology or Teilhard's evolving cosmos continue the attempt to explain God in ways that try to save his virtue, while making him less than completely powerful: the idea is that the picture is not yet complete.

This sort of thinking should be resisted. The power revealed in Christ upsets all ideas of power as control, even evolving control. What I want to suggest involves no more than a couple of hints, and maybe that's as good as we'll ever get. God's presence is made manifest not only in acts of compassion and self-sacrifice; it is present to us only when we place ourselves there, where God has been in the flesh. We can begin to discern God's presence and God's will only when we are, to some extent, like God; and any attempt to go beyond that—in explanation, in thought—is vain. Jesus tells us that we will not be forgiven if we do not forgive, that we are to love even our enemies, that whatever we do for the least human being is done for God. God's strength is revealed in absolute powerlessness (from our point of view), in the death of Christ on the cross. He has collapsed the distance between divine immutability and human suffering, and the initiative is all from his side; but we are invited to participate, and told that the consequences will be serious if we do not.

Beyond this, I think we should be willing to know nothing. We have to answer, "How could a good God permit such suffering?" with a nonanswer: "I have no idea, except that he stood

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where the suffering are, and suffered with them." When Jesus says, "He who has seen me has seen the Father," he tells us both that this is the kind of God we have, and also that this is all we can know of him. The rest is hidden, and is meant to be. The hiddenness calls us to trust, to a living, and therefore risky, relationship. As in any serious relationship—like marriage or parenthood—we live with the faith and hope that things will turn out wonderfully, but, this side of the end, we can't be absolutely sure. It isn't our place, at this point, to know the results or the end of the story, other than to try to trust the one who tells us.

It is fascinating that Jesus is, in a sense, hidden, following the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene mistakes him for the gardener; the disciples on the shore do not recognize him until they fill their nets; the disciples on the road to Emmaus do not know the one to whom they are talking until they recognize him in the breaking of the bread. And most significantly, at the end of Matthew's Gospel, he has gathered them on the mountain: "And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted." Some doubted: it is clear that something was not entirely clear. It was not obvious that this was the risen Lord Jesus, the same one who had been crucified. This hiddenness may be the way in which he initiates us into the reality

that whatever we do for the least of these, we do for him. And our doubtfulness—our ordinary half-hoping, half-doubting, faith—is not an excuse to avoid the mission: to all of those on the mountain, including those who doubted, he says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...."

The criticism of atheists and agnostics, mentioned above, is not about to vanish—not even if Christians begin to act as if they took the gospel seriously. The belief that life has any inherent meaning is itself an act of faith and can't be demonstrated. Chesterton says, somewhere, that the problem many agnostics have with Christianity is not that it is good news, but rather that the news is too good to be true. There is something bracing about the idea of trying to live an honest and moral life in a universe where honesty and morality are fragile but essential human traits, played out against an indifferent background. Even the noblest Christian looks, to someone who sincerely thinks this way, a bit like a child with an imaginary friend. Our hope for these people is that in the end they will be wonderfully surprised.

"For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:3). The hiddenness that is an essential aspect of the risen Christ applies also to us, and to our own lives this side of death. We are largely hidden from ourselves. We do not know how we might react if put to the test, though we may imagine we would be noble; and we pray, appropriately, in words the Lord gave us, "Do not put us to the test...." Those who have been forced to witness, and have come through, give us hope. They reflect the reality we see in Christ crucified, and in the hope of his Resurrection. The only contact that we will have with this reality, on this side of our resurrection, is found in the face of anyone suffering—anyone, finally, born and on the way to death. The rest is as hidden from us as it is from any agnostic, which should make us understand our brotherhood. □

Andrea Elliott

THE NEW CHILE

The Right after Pinochet

The prediction was obvious. Augusto Pinochet's London arrest would benefit the Chilean human-rights movement while dealing a serious blow to the general's political power base. Obvious, but only half right. After being declared physically unfit to stand trial on charges of human-rights abuses, Pinochet's return to Chile last month made clear the once unthinkable: he is now a hunted man at home. In his absence the courts were emboldened, ordering the arrest of more than a dozen top military officials. Pinochet himself is named in sixty-one lawsuits for human-rights abuses during his rule.

But few would have guessed the other great beneficiary of Pinochet's arrest: the Chilean Right. While Pinochet was away, Joaquin Lavin of the far Right ran for president and nearly took the country by storm. Though he lost to Socialist Ricardo Lagos in a tight January run-off, not since 1970 have conservatives come so close to gaining power through the ballot box. Lavin—freed by the absence of Pinochet—re-invented the Right and may have changed the course of Chilean politics.

Lavin, a "Chicago Boy" economist who once worked in Pinochet's government, took advantage of the former general's detention to do what no conservative has done since the country's return to democracy in 1990: he declared that Pinochet could be tried for human-rights violations if he returned to Chile. Lavin went so far as to meet with relatives of some of the three thousand people killed or disappeared under Pinochet's sixteen-year dictatorship, in what many saw as a disingenuous ploy to get votes. Sincere or not, Lavin told me on the campaign trail that he wanted "to hear

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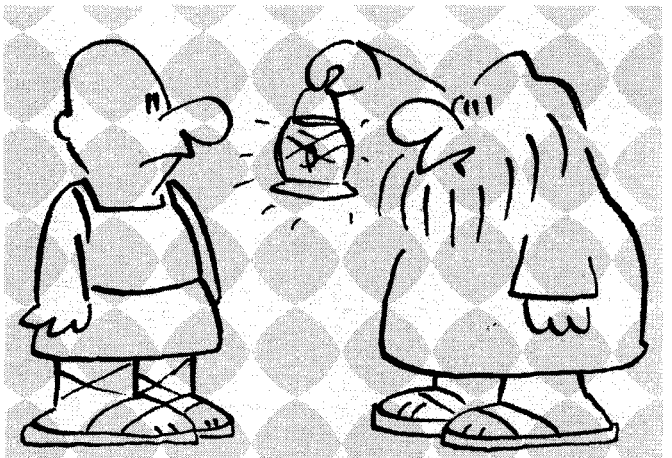

"The honest man thing didn't work out. Now I'm just looking for a good lawyer."

the problems of all Chileans," not just those problems deemed politically correct by a traditionally intolerant Right. Lavin's sudden interest in human rights would have been unthinkable with Pinochet in Chile. But under house arrest in England, the general remained powerless and mute. By election time, he had faded from the headlines. In poll after poll, Chileans placed Pinochet low on their list of concerns, and seemed not to care that Lavin, who rose steadily in popularity, had links to the general.

Lagos, who was jailed under Pinochet and rose to political prominence by opposing him in the late 1980s, was stumped. When he aired a television commercial with footage of Lavin speaking at a Pinochet rally, instead of reacting with horror, Chileans reacted with indifference. The far-Right candidate capitalized on this indifference by describing Lagos as stuck in the divisions of the past. "Vote for me," he said again and again, "and you'll have a president of the future, not the past."

The man had a point. On the surface, Lagos, sixty-one, was unquestionably the person to bring Chile into the twenty-first century. He is politically astute, has a doctorate in economics from Duke University, played a key role in the country's transition back to democracy, and twice served as a minister in the four-party, center-left Coalition that has ruled Chile since Pinochet stepped down. Though Lagos belongs to the Socialist party of Salvador Allende, whom Pinochet overthrew in 1973, his politics are vastly different. He often said he would be not "Chile's second Socialist president, but its third Coalition president." But the Coalition seems to have lost touch with today's Chile, which is marked by a fast-emerging middle class with strong entrepreneurial values and fading memories of the past.

Lavin, forty-six, appealed to this Chile. A former business journalist, whose only elected office was as mayor of the wealthy Santiago township of Las Condes, Lavin had fewer credentials than Lagos but a much better ear. He captured Chile's attention by distancing himself from Pinochet, and he held it with an American-style campaign—heavily financed by business—never before seen in Chile. He dressed in T-shirts and khakis, drove a Jeep from town to town (taking cues, he said, from former Florida governor "Walkin' Lawton" Chiles) and snapped Polaroids of himself with supporters, which he then handed out. He spoke to people casually, never from behind a podium.

The conservative candidate's proposed policies matched his American campaign style. Borrowing from Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," Lavin signed a contract with each of Chile's thirteen regions. He promised harsh crime-fighting measures similar to those of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. And with the economy in the middle of a recession, he offered a Clintonesque vow to create jobs. In sharp contrast to previous conservative presidential hopefuls who advocated budget-cutting, Lavin proposed more than a dozen new spending programs.

Meanwhile, Lagos campaigned with the message: "Growth with Equality." Aside from being hopelessly abstract, it seemed out of step with the spirit of the times. As pundits pointed out, Chileans don't want to be equal; they want to get ahead. Following Lavin's lead, Lagos quickly revamped his campaign and changed his slogan to "A Much Better Chile." His conservative opponent had made it sound as if Chile were falling apart when in fact the country had had the best decade of peace and prosperity in its history. Lagos took pains to show this prosperity—the Santiago skyline dotted with gleaming new buildings—while hanging on to the message of social equality.

While Lagos's tactics finally worked, he must take some significant lessons with him to his presidency. Lavin almost succeeded because he spoke plainly, and took the pomp out of Chilean politics. Lagos, who was often called the "royal candidate" for his abstract and formal speeches, will have to get off the podium and roll up his sleeves. He should continue to champion human rights, but may also shift the Left's focus to other issues of political freedom such as police harassment and censorship. And he must remember the other great lesson from the elections: after a decade of secure democracy, Chileans are ready for change and unafraid to vote for it. The Right, with Lavin, showed it can look democratic, young, and promising.

The stakes are high. The Right owns most of Chile's universities, media, and businesses. The Coalition is Chile's only counterweight to this conservative stronghold. A Lavin government would mean conservatism across the board—a scary prospect in a country where censorship is still widespread. Furthermore, despite Lavin's image of change, many of his inner circle played a key role in Pinochet's regime and would likely assume posts in a Lavin administration. In his concession speech, Lavin told Chileans his loss was really a triumph because nearly half the country had voted for him. He vowed to run again in 2006—and win. □

Andrea Elliott, *a reporter with the* Miami Herald, *recently covered the Chilean elections. She is currently working on a book about Chile's transition to democracy.*

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THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

It's an operation on the heart

Patricia Hampl

Bill Jack, my old friend from grade school, has reminded me. It all remains indelible and permanently mysterious to him, too: those Saint Paul Saturday nights in lilac time, the years before daylight-savings, when it was already dark by seven o'clock. Monsignor Cullinan, little barrel of a body, shuffling up the slight incline of Lexington in an oddly staccato way. And Father Slattery. Handsome and remote. He always accompanied monsignor, and slowed his long-legged gait to match the old man's. A priestly Mutt and Jeff. They were returning from their after-dinner stroll, headed back to Saint Luke's to hear Saturday night confessions. In the cobalt light, their cassocks slapped softly against their trouser legs.

Easy to bring them back. They come up Lex from Grand, a busy street even then. Pause at Summit, their destination the pale gray hulk of Saint Luke's on the far corner. From the deep pockets of their cassocks, each priest roots out a big handkerchief. Then, waving these white squares above their black shapes, they step off the sidewalk. Cars screech to a halt. They proceed across the avenue, holding up traffic, their white flags fluttering in the growing gloom of early evening. They disappear through the side door to the basement church where the Catholics are already patiently lined up, waiting to present their sins.

That's how it was, late 1950s, even well into the 1960s. On a Saturday night, this typical exchange: someone, probably my brother, calling out, "Wanna go to the movie at the Uptown?" And one of us replies, "Sure. Go to confession first? Movie doesn't start till 7:30." The easy presence of sacramental life all around us.

The casual assumption of religion, the unapologetic publicness of it on the streets of our neighborhood, the parish priests (in those years there were several for a big parish like Saint Luke's) walking along Summit in the late afternoon, reading their breviaries. You were supposed to move out of their way if, absorbed in prayer, they happened to stray to your side of the pavement as you passed by, though it was considered a nice touch if a priest raised his head briefly from the prayer book and smiled (Father Kennedy, the cute one, sometimes winked). Nobody spoke—oh no. They had to read their Office, it was a dark sin not to—their kind of sin, not a sin we needed to bother with, but a sin nonetheless. Leave them to it.

Signs of grace abounded. Nuns dipped into the side door of Saint Luke's, "for a little adoration," as they airily said. Children were excused from class and trooped over to the church from the grade school next door to sing, in birdy voices, the dank sentiments of the *Dies irae* at weekday funerals when the professional quavering contralto of Alma Quince (no kidding) was elsewhere engaged. It was not uncommon to see people, women especially, walking along one of the parish side streets, Oxford or Milton, saying the rosary, hand in pocket, fingers passing over the beads, lips faintly moving. Sometimes the rosary was held, two-fisted, right in front. A bit showy maybe, and only for older ladies understood to be widowed or otherwise alone in the world. But in such cases, this public piety was the badge of a solitude well employed.

Patricia Hampl *is the author of* I Could Tell You Stories *(W.W. Norton), a finalist for this year's National Book Critics Circle Awards. This essay is excerpted from* Signatures of Grace: Catholic Writers on the Sacraments *(Dutton), edited by Thomas Grady and Paula Huston. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

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We were surrounded by worship, buoyed up by gestures of belief, as if many wings were flapping all about us, like the white hankies miraculously stopping traffic on Summit, keeping us suspended in the peculiar vacancy of our ordinary lives which, in this way, were not allowed to pass for ordinary at all. *The kingdom of God is within you, boys and girls. Never forget that.*

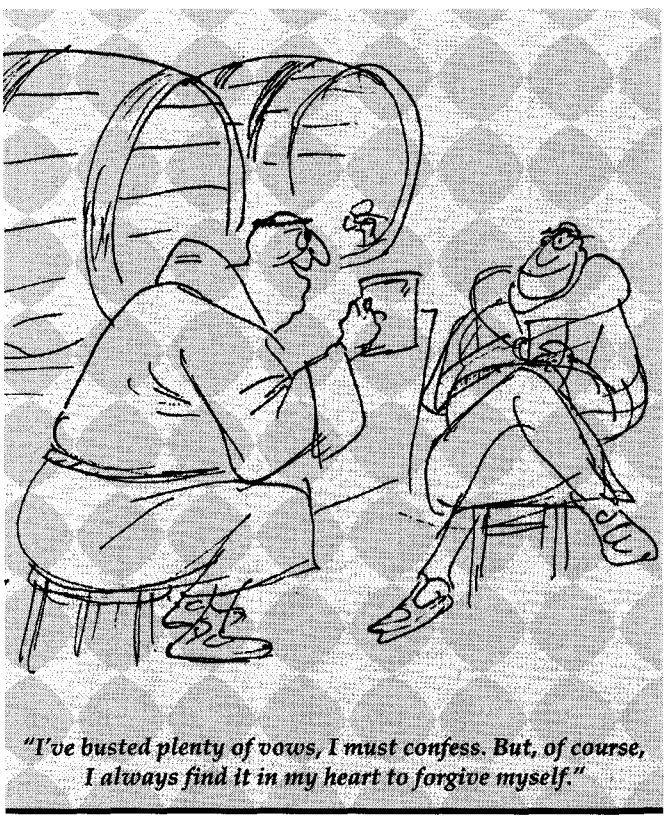
How ever could we?

Yet, standing in the long line trailing from the confessional with the white card marked FATHER KENNEDY (Never go to monsignor! we warned each other—he'll give you five rosaries, all fifteen Mysteries), it was hard not to feel hopeless. What, exactly, could I come up with in the way of presentable sins?

I had been instructed, along with everyone in Sister Julia's second-grade class, to make a careful examination of conscience before entering the confessional to recite my sins. This entailed ticking one's way down the Ten Commandments, flushing out faults in a bookkeeperly fashion, accumulating a decent tally to present in the confessional.

My life—all the world around me—I saw glumly, bred a terrible absence of activity of any kind useful to the purpose. Forget mortal sins—they were in a class far above anything we could hope to muster (*"You are unlikely to encounter any mortal sins, boys and girls, as you make your examination of conscience, but remember, a venial sin must still be understood as a sin of consequence"*). The scant sweepings of venial sins I was left to scavenge were hardly inspiring.

If the kingdom of God was within me, as Sister claimed, well and good. And I could feel it—wasn't that what happiness was? But where was Satan? Where his works and pomps? Didn't they—sins and sinning—constitute the other part of life, hidden but vast, a kind of thrilling hot breath seething somewhere beyond everyday life?



"I've busted plenty of vows, I must confess. But, of course, I always find it in my heart to forgive myself."

It wasn't that I felt myself to be in a state of perpetual grace, already perfected, enclosed within a spiritual sanctuary bounded away from the reality of sin and its complications. None of that. I was simply disappointed by the quality of sin available to me, the predictability and flat antinarrative tedium of my lists. Even the tallies seemed foolish and mingy. *Bless me, Father, it's been two weeks since my last confession. I disobeyed my folks, um, ten times...maybe more, maybe twenty times....No, ten is about right....*

I went through a childhood of Saturday night recitations feeling guilty not for my sins but for the boredom of my life. There was no story in any of this confessing. My life was a grocery list—or worse, it was an antique clerk's desk into whose pigeonholes I divvied up my sins like shopkeepers' bills come due: so many lies, so many disobediences.

Puberty, in a way, saved me. Finally, I approached the confessional in a cold sweat. Finally, the hot breath of stealth and secrecy breathed upon me. This was what all the shouting was about. More than the sudden alarm of sex, it was this: I experienced the self at stake.

That Saturday, I shilly-shallied between Slattery and Kennedy—which one to present with what, after all, was my real first confession? Monsignor, of course, was unthinkable. I'd always been a Kennedy penitent, an instinct for his lightness, the cheerful wink along the sidewalk. But this was something else again, something which, I intuited, required a more stately impersonality. I pulled aside the mud-colored drape of Slattery's confessional and knelt in the sudden dark, waiting for his hand to slide open the little window veiled with tallow-colored muslin where, at last and with the desperate "contrite heart" we had been told was the proper state for the penitent, I would confess to "thoughts," and yes, to "deeds" as well.

I had decided to lead with my usual tally of disobediences and "unkind thoughts" and so forth, plenty of those at the ready. They would serve as a sort of hors d'oeuvre for this new thing of the night, the alarming, hungry shadows of desire. Then, the plunge, gratefully grabbing the exquisite euphemism provided by the "examination of conscience" under the Sixth Commandment at the back of the *Baltimore Catechism*—"impure thoughts and deeds, Father...."

"Alone or with others?" Slattery murmured smoothly.

With *others*? What was he *thinking* of? "Alone, Father!" I cried, the shock hurling my voice aloud, out of the confessional whisper.

He lowered his own voice slightly, and in the same uninsinuating, unconcerned tone, suggested I might listen to music on the hi-fi at such times.

"We don't have a hi-fi, Father."

Well, did we have a radio? Yes, we had a radio. So listen to the radio. Or TV was good.

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Then, a couple of Our Fathers and a handful of Hail Marys, and I was in the light again.

The dark cubby of the confessional, the low whisper of the private voice rendering to God not what is God's but what is the Devil's—it was an astonishing procedure. Confession, as we experienced it at Saint Luke's, was not an occasion of self-inflation or egotism, nor (once the initial shock of declaration was absorbed) was it an exercise in humiliation. It offered, in return for the humble acknowledgment of the broken truths of the self, nothing short of a new life. Here was the baptismal promise beating along the pulse—not an idea but an intense throb of liberation. A moment of personal liberation: to emerge from the time-out-of-time darkness of the little box, overwhelmed with gratitude, and in possession of a wondrous discovery—that we are creatures born for radiance. Our natural state is to be light, free, ready for the next thing.

Maybe this liberating sensation was just a surfeit of relief, bred of a ruinous scrupulosity. It is tempting to dismiss it that way. But the old-style confession, the kind that still fires the popular imagination and that has fascinated and marked writers in the supposedly nonreligious (even antireligious) passing century—James Joyce, Mary McCarthy come to mind—this was, finally, a sacramental act. If by "sacramental" we mean an authentic, if mysterious, change wrought within the human heart by ritual gestures and words, murmurs and the absolving movement of an anonymous hand poised above a bowed head.

The desire to be free "from all anxiety," as one of the blessings of the Mass puts it, is the oldest human spiritual hankering we have record of. The Psalmist knew its essential inwardness even in the public life of a tribal culture. "Not burnt sacrifices you want, O Lord," he cries from the pathos of the private self struggling against the weight of public gestures, "burnt offering you do not desire." What God wants is "a broken, contrite heart."

In a way, the long history of the sacrament has been the history of the struggle between the need of the inner self to be unburdened and the requirement of the institution to have its members within its embrace. The progression of its name changes—from penance to confession, and more recently to reconciliation—bespeaks this tension.

In the fragile and apocalyptic early church, penance was conceived as a public reconciliation, necessary to the very existence of the congregation. For if, after the drenching purification of baptism, people did still persist in sin (as Paul's letters attest again and again) then there had to be a method, a mechanism even, for re-conversion. The community had to see, in public weeping, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, clear symbols of repentance so that the reclamation of the individual could be entire. Orders of penitents, roughly parallel to catechumens, were created, and returning sinners, during their period in the penitential order, were encouraged and supported by the Christian community. A public liturgy (praising God's mercy for their return) restored penitents to the status of faithful Christians.

But by the sixth century, the process by which penitents returned to the community had calcified into a canonical procedure whose legalisms undermined the impulse among most Christians to pursue reconciliation. Penance degenerated into a coercive penalty rather than a voluntary method for rehabilitation. The most troubling long-term effect of this legalistic direction was that, like baptism, the sacrament of penance was allowed only once in a lifetime as the early church developed its thinking on the subject. There was a contradiction here, of course, with the basic gospel teaching of ongoing, even constant forgiveness.

But there it was—and there it stayed until evangelizing Irish monks gave the medieval church the model of private confession. By grafting an indigenous pagan idea—the Druid *anmchara* (soul-friend)—onto the sacrament of penance, the monks developed the idea of a confessor, and drew the newly converted Celts to the exuberant confession of sins. The soul-friend heard a private recitation of offenses and assigned a penitential act. Different sins had different satisfactions and these were listed in books called "penitentials." This method for unloading the burden of sin involved no social stigma, no public exposure. And, in place of one chance on earth to wipe the slate clean before final judgment, it offered a repeatable pattern of forgiveness in the natural round of life. Their method brought the sacrament,

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inevitably, to the brink of storytelling and the magic healing of narrative, as if to the doorstep of its true destiny.

Pilgrimage was a popular and public medieval form of expiation, and storytelling stood at its very heart. Moving across the earth, close to the ground, in a small band of fellow penitents bearing a pilgrim scallop shell as their talisman, sinners pondered their own life journey, and listened to the tales of others along the way. It is an eloquent coincidence that English narrative literature begins with Chaucer among the pilgrims, penitents expiating—and retelling as stories—their sins. Here in the late medieval springtime, April is not yet the "cruellest month" of the alienated self. Though it is the painful season of Christ's agony and death, it belongs in Chaucer to the elemental happiness rising from the resurrecting earth.

With the Renaissance winking on the horizon, the medieval penitent seems to have the best of both public and private penance: sin needn't be shaming public exposure, and expiation needn't be a private hairshirt, a half-step short of neurosis. Certainly pilgrimage as a form of expiation underscores the liberation that is meant to be the core of the sacrament, the radiant lightness of the shriven heart.

Without the inner satisfactions of forgiveness, the self is burdened beyond its capacity to carry on, to make the journey of its life. But who, exactly, does the forgiving? The medieval mind knew it was the Lord God, through his ordained representative, the priest. Modern psychology, on the other hand, demands that we forgive ourselves. This is meant to be a liberation (from the strictures of a confining institution), but it proves to be a ruinous burden for the lonely self.

The sacrament comes to us out of our deep past. It streams clouds of cultural assumptions from other, more communal, even tribal—and certainly hierarchical—times. It asks us to *receive* forgiveness, to see that it is a gift given, not an accomplishment of our own making.

*Bless me, Father, it has been thirty years—make that thirty-two—since my last confession....*An absurd way to begin. But when, a few years ago, I returned to the sacrament, I might have said something like that. Might have—but didn't. But I thought it; the old formulaic beginning of confessional recitation is bred deep inside a pre-Vatican II mind.

Maybe because of that association, I had let the sacrament "lapse"—another old-style Catholic term. Confession belonged to the bad old church, not the one I was trying to be part of. *My* church was "progressive," and its allegiance to tradition and to ancient liturgy were also, in their self-conscious ways, progressive too. I didn't stand in line in the basement of Saint Luke's anymore; I didn't seek out the solemn drama of the little black box. And most of all, I didn't present my tally of sins. I let the congregational ritual of reconciliation, communal and not sin-specific, take care of the confession department of Catholic life.

And, of course, I went into therapy, huddling for months of weekly "sessions," "dealing with" what I learned to call "my issues," sorting out the litter of a life at what felt like the midpoint. I shared a couch in a room full of green plants with my therapist's elderly springer which regarded me with his baleful spaniel eyes before sighing deeply and rounding into his corner of the couch where he slept the sleep of the blameless for the entire hour, moaning occasionally, whether from dreams of misery or delight, it was not clear. The couch was slung so low that I felt I was rising from a crouch when I finally left at the end of my hour, rudely awakening the dog as I heaved myself up and out.

I went every week. I told my tale. I told it this way. Then I told it that way. I was balled up in a passionate determination to "figure things out." Sometimes I blamed *him*, sometimes *her*. There were plenty of hims and hers to work over. But inevitably, of course, I blamed myself. It was a completely absorbing enterprise for perhaps eighteen months, and at the same time I marveled at the boredom of it, the tedium of my telling. But how could I be bored? This was my life!

It wasn't a grocery list of sins. But it was, in a way, even less compelling. At least a list has its clean purpose, nothing more, nothing less than its gathered details. But in my storytelling there was a desperate wish that made my testimony unreliable. I didn't see this for a long time. I kept talking. But finally, as if the tumblers of a resistant lock had come round in the magical right combination, I got the message: I was never going to figure it out. To my greater surprise I registered this fact with pleasure, with a sense of liberation.

My therapist congratulated me: I was done with therapy. The springer spaniel didn't even cock an eye open when I slipped from the couch, and left the room full of green plants behind.

Shortly after this, I went on a retreat to a monastery perched high on a mountain above the Pacific, the steep slant of the hillocky land ending in the great pastel muddle of sky and sea. Some days it was impossible to find the horizon, the air and water had conspired so successfully to confuse themselves. The days began before dawn with lauds in the chapel. Every day was silent except for our mouthing the psalmist's ancient passions, his cries for mercy, his rebukes and terrors, his lyric tendernesses. Such moodiness at the heart of Western religion!

The monks, who dressed in casual clothes around the monastery grounds, wore cream-colored robes in the chapel, which strangely accentuated their individuality rather than obscured it. One day, toward the end of my week on the mountain, I realized I had settled on a face I wished to make my confession to. The lean and abstract face of an elderly monk. I hadn't even realized I had been looking for a confessor, but there he was. He seemed startled when I asked him if he would hear my confession, but he agreed immediately.

We met later that day in a room at the side of the chapel. He was wearing blue jeans and a plaid flannel shirt. I had expected the cream-colored robe. But as he sat down in a straight-back chair, he produced a hand-woven stole and draped it around his shoulders. And instantly became a

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priest, and the setting sacramental. I sat in a similar chair facing him. The room was large and airy. He smiled as I looked around. "I suppose you're used to doing this in the box," he said with a gentle irony that referred not to me, it seemed, but to the world we both had once inhabited and which, he intimated with his smile, I was braving again.

I told him I didn't even know what confession was anymore. I knew this admission wouldn't faze him. I produced the little Saint Luke's style grocery list I had prepared. We both smiled over it. "Maybe you should just talk a little," he said.

But I didn't tell my tale. I told him what I wished for, the qualities of heart I lacked and wished were mine. The sacrament, he said, as if to himself, though I was aware I had been listened to with absolute attention, is not really about sin. It is about hardness of heart. It was a scriptural term, he reminded me—*hardness of heart*; it referred to the ball of pride and fear and misery that makes freedom so difficult. The sacrament, he said, is about freedom.

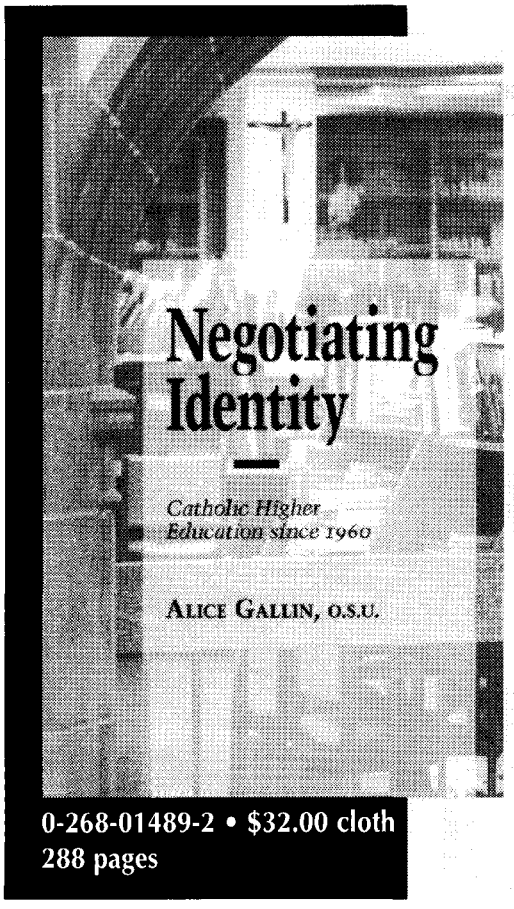
I talked. He listened. There was absolutely no disapproval for anything I said. He radiated a quiet, absorbed *interest* in my sins. Like a doctor looking at a symptom, trying to find cause and cure. He had a perfect pitch of warmth and coolness. We were meeting in a free middle, between friendship and being utter strangers. It was sacred ground, impersonal, sacramental. It was almost casual, like sitting in a boat on one of the lost inland Minnesota lakes with my father, waiting for a nibble. Together in the stillness of the natural world, knowing the truth was down there and might bite, might be mine. But there was nothing to do, just put yourself in the presence of it and see what happens.

He suggested I read the whole Gospel of Luke for my penance. "Take six months—don't rush." Then he smiled, "Seeing you've been away from the sacrament so long, you can afford a long penance." He wasn't toying with me. He was playing with the form. An artist.

He raised his hand over my bowed head, said the ancient absolving words I knew from Latin: "*Ego te absolvo....*" Then we parted, he to the monastery, I to the mountain where I stood alone in the late afternoon light, looking out at the rind of America as it peels off into the flourish of the sea, the sky somewhere out there in it all too. *The sacrament is not really about sin. It is about hardness of heart.*

The burnt sacrifices of self-castigation, of blame and shame, all the slaughters on the high altar of the self that it is possible to present as one's truth. It is a modern form of hard-heartedness, earnest but rigid. A sentence formed in my head—though it felt as if it came not from me but out of the damp air drenched with the smell of eucalyptus: *You don't get to understand, you just get to acquiesce.*

The black box had opened, its dank closet revealed itself now as nothing less than the panorama of the glorious world. I stood there, shivering in the growing cold, unable to make out the hinge of sea and sky, glad of that confusion, glad to give over to the mystery at last. □



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—**Blanche Blank**, Center for Philanthropy, New York University, and former President of Hunter College

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WHO'S AFRAID OF HIERARCHY?

The people of God have to be organized. Here's how.

Terence L. Nichols

For many today, "hierarchy" connotes oppressive social or ecclesial control. Authors such as Leonardo Boff, Sallie McFague, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Riane Eisler, and others explicitly or implicitly equate hierarchy with authoritarianism, domination, patriarchy, and rigidity. A "hierarchical" church, based on centralized control, is said to oppose a "democratic" church, based on equality and participation. Indeed, some New Testament scholars, such as Fiorenza (*A Discipleship of Equals*) and John Dominic Crossan (*The Historical Jesus*) have argued that the original Jesus movement was radically egalitarian, and this utopian society was supplanted by a hierarchical church which deformed its founder's intentions. The recent controversy concerning John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* (*see Commonweal*, November 5, 1999) has again focused attention on the problem of hierarchy and authoritarianism in the Catholic church. Here I will argue that hierarchy and participation are not antithetical but complementary, and that the Christian church is meant to be not egalitarian, but rather a participatory hierarchy.

It is, however, true that many hierarchical structures are patriarchal and authoritarian. Such arrangements, which might be called *command hierarchies*, are based on force and found in animal societies (the "pecking order") as well as human societies. In emergency situations, where survival demands swift decisions, such exclusively top-down structures can be justified. But as a long-term prescription for society they tend toward tyranny.

On the other hand, any sizable society needs some kind of hierarchical structure if it is to function as a unified whole. In a family, a high school or college class, a university, a team, an orchestra, a corporation, or a church, the alternative to hierarchy would seem to be disintegration and paralysis. Families without parents or classrooms without teachers don't work. A hierarchy of expertise and competence is recognized in most human activities.

Conversely, a consistent egalitarianism, that is, the denial of all hierarchical roles, is not workable in large groups. To conduct a class, but allow the opinions of the most ignorant to count the same as those of the learned, would destroy teaching and learning. To govern a family by allowing children an equal vote on every issue would probably destroy the children and the family itself. Nor could an orchestra successfully perform if at least one person did not have the authority to unify the participants. The same principles could be applied to governments, corporations, fire and police units, universities, and churches. Without some form of recognized leadership and authority, social units are incapable of concerted action. Egalitarians are right in stressing the basic equality of *persons* before God and the law. They err, however, in excluding the possibility of hierarchical *roles* within a society or a church.

In fact all Christian denominations confess the Lordship (that is, hierarchical authority) of God and Christ, and virtually all evince some kind of hierarchical ecclesial structure. This is especially true of episcopal churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, some Lutherans), which have traditionally justified hierarchy from the authority of the apostolic college, itself rooted in the authority of Christ. It is true to a lesser degree of evangelical and independent Protestant groups as well. Vatican II insists that the church is a hierarchically structured society (*Lumen gentium*, chapter 3), and in this it follows two thousand years of tradition.

In short, whether or not the church should be a hierarchy is not the question. Rather, we should ask, What kind of hierarchy should there be? It is a mistake to identify all hierarchy with authoritarian command. There is an alternative hierarchical model, one based on participation, inclusion, integration, and subsidiarity, in which members are empowered by participation in a greater whole and influence flows both from the leader to the members and from the members to the leaders. This I call *participatory hierarchy*. It recognizes a fundamental equality of persons but a hierarchy of roles and office; its leaders govern not by an authority based on force, but by an authority based on expertise, competence, and (in the widest sense of the term) "virtue." This is the authority of the craftsperson, the guide, the doctor, the teacher, the expert, and the saint.

Anthropologists, of course, have written extensively on how hierarchical social systems work. However, my hierarchical model is drawn from the natural sciences. In nature, any complex system is not homogeneous; rather it is composed of subsystems, which are themselves composed of subsystems, which are in turn composed of subsystems, etc. Thus the human body is composed of organs and tis-

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sues, which are composed of cells, which are composed of cellular organelles and macromolecules, which are composed of smaller molecules, which are composed of atoms. Each higher system organizes and regulates lower systems, *without interfering with their principles of operation*. Lower systems thus have their own autonomy. The human heart, for example, will survive and beat erratically outside the body *in vitro*, but within the body its beating is regulated by the larger system. Similarly, a cell can survive *in vitro*, and even grow and reproduce, but within an organ or body its activity and direction of growth are regulated by the organ or body. The same is true for molecules and atoms, which, within a larger system, obey their characteristic laws but are partially regulated by the encompassing system.

A complex system made up of subsystems is known in science as a *hierarchy of complexity*. In such a system, the parts (subsystems) affect the whole, but the whole also regulates and constrains the operations of the parts. In other words, there is dual causality.

Arthur Koestler has proposed the term "holon" for a system which is a whole with respect to its subsystems, but is itself a part of a larger system. Such a system of systems of systems (that is, a hierarchy of complexity) Koestler calls a *holarchy*. It can be represented as a circle which encloses smaller circles, each of which encloses smaller circles, etc. Koestler argues that the principle of the holon applies to virtually all natural systems: organisms, ecosystems, languages, societies, institutions, etc. Though the nature of the relation between the whole and its parts will vary from case to case, the principle of the holon seems to be virtually ubiquitous. Everything in nature seems to be some sort of holon.

I think this model of hierarchy or holarchy, which is a hierarchy of inclusion and participation, is appropriate for the church. It is of course analogous: one cannot directly apply a model based on natural systems to ecclesial hierarchy. But there is precedent: Saint Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, also uses the body as an analogy for the church, and to similar purpose.

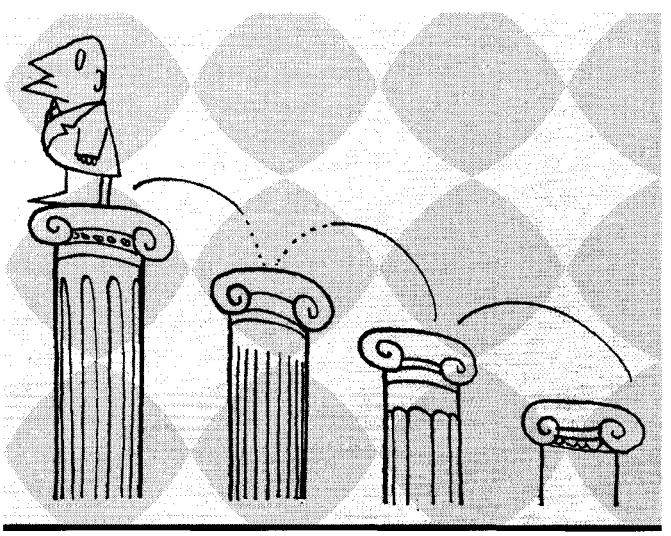
What would such a model of ecclesial hierarchy look like? Most important, the autonomy of subsidiary systems would be preserved, though there would be some regulation of the subsidiary units due to their participation in a larger whole (this is similar to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity). As in a holarchy, there will be multiple subsidiary holons, each regulated by an appropriate body of persons (for example, national regions served by a body of bishops, a diocese served by a bishop, a parish served by a priest). There would be allowance for influence both from the whole to the parts and from the parts to the whole.

Both command hierarchy and egalitarianism would deform this model of hierarchy. Egalitarianism would reduce the holarchy to its simplest elements—perhaps individual parishes or even individual persons; there would be no means of integrating these into any larger whole. Excessive command, on the other hand, would stifle the legitimate autonomy of the subsidiary wholes, destroy any influence of the parts on the whole, and reduce the church to a tyranny. Either egalitarianism or command hierarchy would vitiate the balanced, integrated diversity which we find in holarchy.

This model of participatory hierarchy is consistent with the kind of authority found in the Jesus movement, with that practiced in the early church, the religious orders, with the ontological hierarchy of the church, and with Vatican II. Scholars as varied as Rudolf Bultmann, Joachim Jeremias, Norman Perrin, Ben Meyer, E.P. Sanders, and John Meier consider the proclamation of the kingdom of God to be at the core of Jesus' message. "Kingdom" here means the rule or reign of God over a renewed Israel. Because the message was meant for the whole people of Israel, Jesus particularly sought out the lost, the sinners, and the marginalized. Thus he flouted the social hierarchies of his time by eating and associating with outcasts. Nonetheless, his conception of the kingdom certainly involved submission to God's will and rule—he addressed God as "*Abba*," "Father." But the aim of his preaching was not to bring about God's domination, but to draw all into participation in the greater whole of God's kingdom—in a word, into a participatory hierarchy. Moreover, within his own movement Jesus exercised both moral and spiritual authority (he was addressed as teacher). His aim, however, was not command over his followers, but to draw them into the closeness with the Father that he himself experienced.

Within his movement he appointed the Twelve as an inner core of leaders, and his promise to them was that they would rule over the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30), hardly an egalitarian message! His admonition to the Twelve, that "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35), which some interpret as evidence of an egalitarian community, I think, indicates the manner in which leadership was to be exercised: as service, whose aim is to foster participation, not domination.

A later and perhaps the best example of this pattern can be seen in Acts 15, when the nascent Christian community had



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to decide whether to require Gentile converts to be circumcised. The decision is portrayed as being made after extensive discussion among the members, including the Apostles and elders. The final decision, delivered by James (not Peter) carried the consensus of the whole community (Acts 15:22), and that consensus was seen as representing the will of the Spirit (Acts 15:28). This is certainly an idealized account; there remained a procircumcision faction (Gal. 2:12). But Acts 15 can be seen as representing a kind of narrative charter, an inspired model, for decision making in the church. Here is leadership, but also extensive participation.

This pattern continued in the early ecumenical councils, especially Nicaea. The aim of the bishops was not to impose the will of a majority faction on a minority, but to reach a consensus which would indicate the will of the Spirit. The Second Council of Constantinople went so far as to affirm that it was *only* through debate in common that the truth could be made clear:

> The holy fathers, who have gathered at intervals in the four holy councils,...dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side...the light of truth drives out the shadow of lying. The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbor.

In this way the normative Christian creeds were established. The process was hierarchical, not egalitarian. The bishops, as the heirs in authority to the Apostles and as the representatives of their respective communities, were recognized as possessing the authority to make normative decisions. But equally, no one, not the emperor nor the bishop of Rome, could impose a decision on the whole church; consultation and participation were imperative. This is reflected in the dictum of Pope Leo the Great [d. 461]: "Let whoever is to be set over all be elected by all."

Similarly, Vatican II was a good, though not perfect, example of participatory hierarchy. Certainly it was hierarchical—the bishops were teaching concerning matters of the faith. But unlike some councils, Vatican II was not controlled by the popes or the curia; the bishops rejected the initial documents drafted by the curia and drafted their own. They also consulted widely with non-Catholic observers and theological experts (*periti*), many of whom were also active in drafting council documents.

Can participatory hierarchy incorporate dissent? It is important that dissenting voices be heard, even though the resulting decision may go against them (consensus will never be 100 percent, though that is the ideal). Here I agree with Cardinal Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II), who wrote in *The Acting Person*: "More precisely, in order for opposition to be constructive, the structure, and beyond it the system of communities of a given society must be such as to allow the opposition that emerges from the soil of solidarity not only to *express* itself within the framework of the given community, but also to *operate* for its benefit."

What is the role of the papacy in a participatory hierarchy? Vatican I seems to give the pope absolute jurisdiction over the church. Vatican II, however, situates the pope's authority within that of the episcopal college. John Paul II also makes this point in *Ut unum sint*: "When the Catholic church affirms that the office of the bishop of Rome corresponds to the will of Christ, she does not separate this office from the mission entrusted to the whole body of bishops, who are also 'vicars and ambassadors of Christ.' The bishop of Rome is a member of the 'college,' and the bishops are his brothers in the ministry." Thus the matter is complex. I follow Karl Rahner and others in interpreting Vatican II to mean that there is only *one* supreme subject of authority: the college of bishops conjoined with the bishop of Rome. This means that the pope's decisions ought to be made in communion with his brother bishops and not over against them. The charism of the papacy, then, is to facilitate consensus among the bishops and to proclaim that consensus. The papacy should not dominate the bishops or impose decisions on them, as seems to have been the case in the recent decision on women's ordination.

A hierarchy based on participation and the search for consensus will not work if all the bishops are appointed by the pope. It requires that the bishops truly be representatives of their communities, and therefore that the local clergy and laity have a central voice in their election. Walter Kasper has proposed that bishops be appointed by a "joint act of the relevant local church, the fellow bishops in the district...and the universal church, that is, the pope as head of the college of bishops." For participatory hierarchy to be effective, there must be some way for the *sensus fidelium*, the sense of the faithful (both laity and clergy), to balance the "authority from above" represented by the pope and the bishops. One way to do this is through the election of bishops. According to Archbishop John Quinn (*The Reform of the Papacy*, Crossroad), this was the norm in the church until the early 1800s.

The crucial theological principle guiding the idea of participatory hierarchy is that the Spirit is given to the whole church, not just to the pope or to the bishops and the pope. For the Spirit to be heard in its fullness, the people, the theological community, the clergy and religious orders, and the magisterium must each have a voice in governing the church. At present, the Roman Catholic church is being torn asunder by the problem of authority and hierarchy. The model of inclusive hierarchy sketched above may capture what is legitimate in both sides of this conflict. To reduce the church to an egalitarian congregationalist model would muffle the voice of the Spirit as it speaks through anointed bishops; to reduce it to a papal or episcopal command hierarchy is to stifle the Spirit as it speaks through the people, the clergy and religious, and the community of theologians. Either deforms the catholicity of the church. □

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Richard Alleva

END OF THE AFFAIR

Quitting the movies, for now

Writers use different voices for different tasks, and I have grown sick of my fifteen-year-old movie-reviewing voice. Time to move on. So this is my last column for a while and, though I may return to *Commonweal*'s pages in the near future, it won't be as a film critic.

Packing up my critical equipment (prejudices in the big crate, snideness and sarcasm easily sliding into the thin manila envelope, smug knowingness just about fitting into the steamer trunk but only if I use two straps to keep it from bursting), I recall a few questions that have been asked by readers either in letters or (more intimidatingly) face to face. They deserve some answers before I depart. First, the inevitable:

• What are your favorite movies of all time?

I've seen roughly twenty-five films I consider masterpieces, but the three I keep returning to time and again are *Citizen Kane*, *8 1/2*, and *Persona*. With me, the pleasure principle always rules. Every shot, every second in these three movies is packed with meaningful detail, vitality, mystery. As in a Mozart opera or a Chekhov story, there is no filler, no drop in the dramatic pressure, no marking time between highlights. In fact, there are no highlights at all, just gorgeous small moments alternating with gorgeous big ones. In an age of too many minimalists, Orson Welles, Federico Fellini, and Ingmar Bergman were maximalists. *Kane* and *8 1/2* combine the layered realistic detail of the nineteenth-century novel with the elliptical edginess, irony, and speed of modernism. *Persona* is pure modernism and seems to me to bring the entire era of modernism to its climax.

These three have taught me what film can be at its highest flight. Ever since seeing them, I've kept asking myself why I should settle for anything less. That's not a reasonable question since not every movie even aspires to be a masterpiece, but once the critical incubus is implanted, it can never be silenced. Mephisto told Faust, "I am the Spirit Who Denies." Well, any critic might say, "I am the Spirit Who Demands."

I think this is why many people are irritated, even outraged by critics in the arts. What most people demand of a book, movie, painting, or musical piece is: "Relax me" or "Caress me." When a critic demands, "Enlarge me," he seems unreasonable. (However, a good critic knows enough not to expect a glossy work of entertainment to be a major work of art. Crackling entertainments such as *In the Line of Fire* know their own weight and destinations.)

"I can't watch. Tell me when the heartwarming part is over."

• Did you see any films of the caliber of *Kane*, etc. during your tenure at *Commonweal*?

Yes, one: Gianni Amelio's *Open Doors*. It steadies my soul every time I watch it. Not far behind is *Black Robe*, an adventure story that roused the boy inside me, yet also a spiritual odyssey that disturbed, then expanded my adult consciousness. Its last unforgettable scene recalls the Auden lines from "As I Walked Out One Evening":

"O stand, stand at the window
As the tears scald and start;
You shall love your crooked neighbor
With your crooked heart."

Can a movie fuse James Fenimore Cooper with Georges Bernanos? This one does. (When I recommended *Black Robe* to a very Christian lady, I did so because I thought she would be thrilled by the movie's lucid depiction of a priest learning how to love even the "pagan savages" who had outraged his idea of civilization. But she found the movie unbearable because it contained agonies of body and spirit. For her, such pain was to be dealt with in church while movies were made in order to "make people feel good." Moments like these make a film critic feel like a second-class citizen.)

Then there is *Groundhog Day*, great entertainment and great minor art, the fun version of Sartre's *No Exit*, and a hilarious vindication of the dictum, "Character is fate."

Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Colors* trilogy was remarkable, but only *Blue* approached greatness. However, more about the redoubtable Kieslowski below.

• Did you underrate any film?

No, but I overrated *Life Is Beautiful*, *The Matrix*, and *The Piano*. I wanted to convey how awful they were, but my ingrained kindness betrayed me.

A more serious problem is that

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initial enthusiasm leads a critic (this critic, anyway) to ever so slightly overrate good movies in order to get people to see them. This is a big temptation nowadays when you know that everybody would rather stay home and watch videos. I was quite right to praise, say, *The Remains of the Day* or *Nobody's Fool*, admirable movies both, but if I made them sound as great as *Open Doors* or *Black Robe*., I shouldn't have.

• Can the art of film survive the marketplace?

Look, *there is no movie marketplace.* Not anymore. Of course, there is still a marketplace for "product," that is, video, cable TV programming, export overseas. But there doesn't exist any longer the tried and true agon of theatrical exhibition in which the studio trumpets the greatness of a feature film with boastful advertising and sensational previews, then launches it into big-city theaters, with small towns and the suburbs to be served shortly thereafter. Formerly, the studio may have favored its most commercially promising products over more serious movies with extra PR and the widest release patterns, but this was understandable business practice. Nowadays....

Well, let me put it this way. Movie mogul Harry Cohn used to bray, "This ain't an art, it's a business! No, it isn't even a business, it's a racket!" But nowadays movie production isn't so much a racket as a stalking horse for the real business of producing videos and cable TV rights. For instance, if you haven't seen *Angela's Ashes* yet, you'll be able to rent it in about six months. So why shouldn't I review it in six months for the great mass of people instead of the few millions who got to see *Ashes* in six or seven big cities? What good did the rave reviews of John Simon and Stanley Kauffmann (the two toughest movie critics in New York) do for the movie if the reviews, released in late December, are so far ahead of the movie's national circulation (in March)?

If *Ashes* had made zillions at the box office, the studio heads might have felt obligated to produce several more movies made from gritty memoirs about abysmal poverty, but they weren't about to let that happen. What Hollywood is ready to declare great art nowadays is something like *American Beauty*—slick, smarmy, sneering at social institutions. That's why *American Beauty* was released twice, each time accompanied by the best advertising and the shrewdest sort of circulation. And that's why *Beauty* will win many of the major Oscars this year (I'm writing three weeks before the Oscar ceremony and I predict it will win best picture, actress, original screenplay direction, and cinematography). The Oscars declare what Hollywood wants to produce in the future, not its real accomplishments of the past year. In Hollywood, despite the need to make gazillions of dollars, true capitalism doesn't rule but a desire to make financial success conform to ideological climate. That's why I think of the industry as operating within a kind of demand economy rather than within the consumer-driven marketplace where all other American businesses thrive or fail.

If a film critic really wants to be a connoisseur of his art form the way a literary critic is a connoisseur of his, he should be a video reviewer, not a reviewer of movie-house releases. Let me suit the action to the word by drawing your attention to the fact that Facets Video is now offering, on five video cassettes, all ten episodes of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *The Decalogue*, a greater achievement than his remarkable *Colors* trilogy. The entire series is the perfect refutation of the whole Hollywood ethos. What's the "high concept" here? The Ten Commandments. And what special effects are delivered? Merely the one special effect on the viewer that's caused by images that burn themselves into your brain, editing so skillful that it turns a series of shots into visual melody, writing and acting that create characters so real that they are as recognizable as the people who live next door to you or inside your own skin.

These are not moral fables but works of refined, elliptical realism in the tradition of Anton Chekhov's fiction and drama. There is no didacticism because, as *Time*'s critic, Richard Corliss, put it, Kieslowski and his script collaborator Krzysztof Piesiewicz "were interested in examining the relevance of old laws in a Catholic country in a postmoral age." Right, but I would add that, on the basis of these films, Kieslowski seems to believe that those "old laws" hold up pretty well. But he also has a Graham Greene-like awareness of the inner contradictions of morality, as when the hero of the second commandment episode breaks that commandment in order to keep a woman from breaking the fifth commandment.

In the August 15, 1997, issue of *Commonweal*, Joseph Cunneen examined *The Decalogue* in detail and, if nothing I've written here impels you to rent or buy this series, perhaps his article will. Here is what the art of film can be at its highest flight. Why do we always settle for so much less? (Details of purchase or rental can be had by calling Facets at 773-281-9075; or visiting www.facets.org.)

And now I must finish up my packing so that I will have time to practice my Austrian accent. Why Austrian? Because my editors want me to keep repeating a line made immortal when spoken by a robot with a curious Austrian accent. To wit:

"I'll be back." □

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Celia Wren

DICKENS ON THE TUBE

Masterpiece Theatre's 'David Copperfield'

Like many "fond parents," Charles Dickens wrote in 1869, "I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is David Copperfield."

You can almost feel that favoritism when you read, or reread, the most autobiographical of Dickens's novels, the book into which he projected much of his childhood trauma, including his miserable days, at age twelve, pasting labels in a blacking factory. Even if you don't know its factual basis, *David Copperfield* feels personal. Drifting, on the tide of the narrator's reminiscence, past miserable times and happy times, significance and insignificance, mistakes and successes, you become increasingly convinced that you're involved in a real life.

If the new "Masterpiece Theatre" adaptation of *David Copperfield* (airing April 16 and 17) feels somewhat less like life than like, well, "Masterpiece Theatre," that is hardly a significant criticism. How, after all, do you condense a nine-hundred-page, densely eloquent masterpiece into four hours and still have time left over for commentary by Russell Baker? Adapter Adrian Hodges and director Simon Curtis have, in fact, telescoped the book with considerable delicacy, preserving innumerable small but telling details (the cotton wool Aunt Betsey uses to stop up her ears during David's birth, for example) and lifting much of the dialogue straight from Dickens. Characters may have been pruned, and episodes shuffled or retouched for dramatic effect, but David Copperfield's soul is still there.

The personalities, too, hit the right blend of realism and the grotesque. Ever since Dickens's own lifetime, a classic way to fault his writing has been to condemn its exaggerated characterizations. "It has been the peculiarity and the marvel of this man's power," Anthony Trollope complained, "that he has invested his puppets with a charm that has enabled him to dispense with human nature." And certainly no one would dispute that tic-ridden personalities like *Copperfield*'s immortal Mr. Micawber—constantly debt-ridden but eternally sanguine that "something will turn up"—have more than a little bit of artifice about them. But that's the point, of course, and besides, real people can be caricatures, too. Critics who object to repetitious traits like the "Something will turn up" tag line would have a hard time with my boss, who always whistles the same three-note trill when confronted with a problem, and, when he's surmounted one, walks around rubbing his hands together so audibly you can hear him down the corridor.

In any case, Micawber is a fixture of the literary empyrean, and Bob Hoskins does a creditable job plastering him into public television's universe, too. Stiff-necked and seemingly top-heavy in his curling gray sideburns, making frantic use of his eyebrows, Hoskins is in many ways a cartoon—when he topples over backward while pretending to slit his throat (a ploy to escape creditors), he might be back in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*? But his face is expressive enough to show the real person, too. When he walks young David (Daniel Radcliffe) through the debtors' prison, one solicitous arm draped around the boy's shoulder, you can see why some critics see Micawber as a buffoonish incarnation of Dickens's real father—an imprudent man whose untrustworthiness may also have found its way into the character of the villainous Murdstone (Trevor Eve in the PBS series).

With actors like Sir Ian McKellen (as the vicious though doddering headmaster Mr. Creakle), Maggie Smith (as Aunt Betsey), and Nicholas Lyndhurst (as the smarmy Uriah Heep) also acing the balancing act of Dickensian personality, it's hard not to feel that the creators of "David Copperfield" have given the ExxonMobil Corporation (sponsor of "Masterpiece Theatre") its money's worth. What's missing, of course, is Dickens's exuberant language. When we follow the mature David's early professional career, for example, we do not hear how, when he attends parliamentary debates as a reporter, "Britannia, that unfortunate female, is always

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before me, like a trussed fowl: skewered through and through with office-pens, and bound hand and foot with red tape." Reading a book like *David Copperfield* is a leisurely business; you have to exult in the verbal conceits as you meet them, and you meet a profusion of them.

In fact, the extravagant language, with its verbal detours and hyperbolic images, reinforces that impression of abundance you get from Dickens's novels with their surfeit of characters and details. It's a style that mirrors, in a way, the urban landscapes that form the backdrop for so much of his fiction. Countless stories—more than any author could tap—are washing around in a metropolis like Dickens's London; the city is a sort of grand-scale version of the oddity-packed pawnshops the author likes to describe, most notably, of course, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, whose narrative actually swells up out of the clutter. By comparison, a medium like "Masterpiece Theatre" seems streamlined—the Merchant-Ivory-picturesque montage (a country lane, a berry on a twig, etc.) that launches "David Copperfield's" first episode, for example, seems almost absurdly tidy when compared to the book's thickly written first pages, in which we meet a couple of colorful but completely superfluous characters (for example, an "old lady with a hand-basket") who are never heard from again.

Of course, 150 years after the publication of *David Copperfield*, the tidy TV version may seem, to some people, a more soothing antidote to the frenzy of modern life (the Internet, you might say, has become our Curiosity Shop). In any case, "Masterpiece Theatre's" handsome adaptation is a reminder of George Orwell's remark, in an essay analyzing Dickens's characters: "There are no rules in novel writing, and for any work of art there is only one test worth bothering about—survival. By this test, Dickens's characters have succeeded." □

Chemical Imbalance

Another day on the wing
for the depressed, where vivacious doctors
watch you shuffle from one uneaten meal

to another, as they try to match
the elusive elements that will make you
want to live.

There is a history in the genes
that ignores all love.
When the *Times* says even shyness is a trait

that resists conditioning,
what hope is there for those
who back away from life

as if it were a fire?
What hope, when what blazes
above us scorches the clarity of daylight

into the translucent thickness of ozone?
The superfluous molecule chokes
the air we must breathe to live.

Peter E. Murphy

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Hey! Harry Potter has cousins!

Daria Donnelly

J. K. Rowling has the Midas touch. Her Harry Potter series has drawn even the most recalcitrant nonreaders into the orbit of literature, and has rejuvenated the children's fiction industry (children's paperback book sales are up an astounding 24 percent). Last year, when Rowling professed admiration for Dodie Smith's 1948 *I Capture the Castle* ($13.95, 343 pp., age thirteen and up), Saint Martin's Press quickly repackaged their backlist staple and saw a fivefold increase in sales.

It is easy to see Smith's appeal to Rowling. Both are attracted to the incidental. Both have a penchant for vivid throwaway scenes. They provide welcome relief from the derivative minimalism and dreary realism of so much contemporary children's fiction.

Readers of *I Capture the Castle* will feel as if they have wandered into a stylish Broadway farce, with reason. Dodie Smith (1896–1990), though now best known for *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*, was a playwright before a novelist. *I Capture the Castle* is her crossover debut, a coming-of-age story told from the point of view of a charming seventeen-year-old diarist, Cassandra Mortmain, younger daughter of a penniless and hopelessly blocked modernist writer. This widower, along with three children and new bride, Topaz (a former artist's model who wanders around in less than everything), is hunkered down in his deceased wife's decaying estate in rural England awaiting inspiration, or at least a source of income. The latter appears, anachronistically, in the guise of two rich young bachelors who have just inherited the estate next door. It's Jane Austen meets Noel Coward, with an unforgettable narrator. Cassandra is sharp as a tack, awkward, and still young enough to greet her awakening desire and finer perceptions with astonishment and hyperbole. This is a fun book for adults, and a perfect one for adolescent girls.

Christopher Paul Curtis's Newbery Medal-winning *Bud, Not Buddy* (Delacorte, $15.95, 245 pp., age ten and up) is another novel radiant with charm, as embodied in a narrator just ready to exit childhood. The ten-year-old African-American Bud Caldwell is in flight from his Depression-era orphanage and latest abusive foster home. He sets out by foot from Flint, Michigan, in search of his father, who he believes is the legendary band leader Herman Calloway. With his goofy coping strategies, delayed epiphanies, and sweet impulses, Bud seems an utterly authentic boy. Because Curtis has created a perfectly rendered character rather than a sociological fact, he conveys, without a drop of the dreary or the maudlin, the loneliness, fear, and grief with which Bud has lived since his mother's death. Curtis also masterfully unfolds a portrait of the black working class in the Depression. And he beautifully captures the divide between young children and concerned adults, which sometimes, by great effort and grace, is bridged.

Curtis's easy blend of the social and the particular, and his immense warmth also animate his highly praised first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (Yearling, $5.50, 210 pp., age ten and up). This too is set in Flint's black working-class community, though during the civil rights struggle, and with a focus on a single family. It too is narrated by a fetching ten-year-old, named Kenny. The story equally belongs to his thirteen-year-old brother Byron, a bona fide juvenile delinquent, who careens from tender to embarrassed to cruel, alienated, and terrified. He is the proximate cause of the family's trip to his mother's native Birmingham, where his parents trust that the stricter climate of his grandmother's home and city will help. What they do not anticipate is that the shift in his behavior, as well as Kenny's world-view, will turn on the immense shock of the Birmingham church bombing of September 15, 1963.

"I guess it was just a matter of time."

One of the less creative responses to the Harry Potter phenomenon has been that adults keep pointing book-hungry children to other fantasy literature rather than to whatever is good regardless of genre. But even this can be forgiven since it seems to be what is behind the recent republication of Alan Garner's opus. Garner is widely regarded as the finest postwar children's writer in England, but he is scarcely known here. While most strongly associated with fantasy, Garner has written for all ages, and in several genres.

Of the fantasy novels, my fa-

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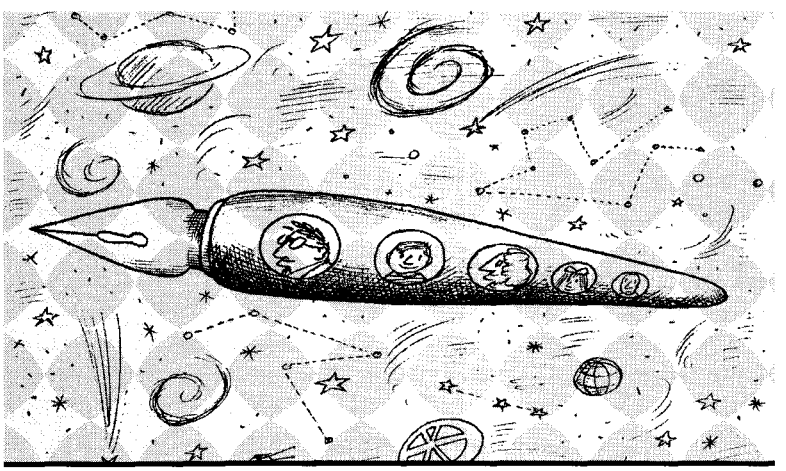
vorites are the 1960 *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (Magic Carpet/Harcourt Brace, $6, 286 pp., age ten and up) and the 1967 *The Owl Service* (Magic Carpet, $6, 219 pp., age twelve and up). Garner wrote *Weirdstone* at age twenty-two, having just relinquished his studies aimed at becoming a professor of classics in favor of returning to his native Cheshire. It is in this geologically and linguistically rich region that his family has lived for three hundred years, working as rural craftsmen. "If I have any real occupation," Garner has written, "it is to be here." As a chosen craft, writing has allowed Garner to integrate the personal, cultural, and linguistic dislocation (Garner identifies his first language as North-West Mercian, and his second as Standard English) that he experienced as the first in his family to receive a grammar-school and university education. *The Owl Service* is his only book set outside East Cheshire.



Both novels center on outsider children coming to live temporarily in rural landscapes that are linguistically and physically exotic and saturated with myths. (These are not invented but are real stories specific to the real sites: Garner is a serious anthropologist and archaeologist of place.) The children are swept up into stories that predate them and which will remain after them, stories whose outcomes depend upon their right action. I have never read a novelist who handles terror like Garner. He almost entirely forgoes conventional suspense in favor of the fear attendant on getting the task done—a fear the children must push back lest it overwhelm them. *The Owl Service*, which is particularly deft, layers on top of this a very bracing look at the sexual and social tension between the visiting English and a native adolescent, Gwyn, who is the first literate child of his family.

Partly as a result of his training in classics, and partly to honor rural reticence, Garner strips his writing to the bone: each word, each scene, and each gesture is necessary, and its absence unimaginable. This is especially true of the recently republished 1976 *The Stone Book Quartet* (Flamingo, $17.50, 172 pp., all ages) which I regard as his masterpiece. These interlocking stories—*The Stone Book, Granny Reardun, The Aimer Gate, Tom Fobble's Day*—trace Garner's family from the Victorian period to World War II. The focus is on human labor, not aspiration or regret or sentiment. Still, these books are dense with feeling. The landscape testifies to the habitation and acts of the dead, which, if inscrutable to the living, evoke inexpressibly deep emotion. A young girl discovers a fossilized handprint and stands in mute wonder; a cheap pipe is dropped and four generations (and books) later is found by a boy who prizes it as his birthright; a house torn down in *Granny Reardun*, so that its dimension stone can be used to build the vicar's garden wall, remains as an earthen bump in *Tom Fobble's Day* which merely thrills the sled-riding descendant of the family expelled from it. This hint that the bump the children sled over hides a ruined foundation grips the story's more sensitive boy with a complex terror and joy.

While all the authors already mentioned give pleasure, Garner achieves something much rarer: a sense of awe before the marvelous. The effect comes not simply from the characters' contact with an uncannily peopled and storied topography, but from Garner's judicious integration of his region's dialect and standard English. In his 1997 collected essays, *The Voice That Thunders* (Harvill, $24, 244 pp.), Garner talks about the absolute necessity, for our souls, of achieving a language which brackets stories off from the everyday. He loathes, in equal measure, versions of the old stories which value relevance and accessibility above all, and those that are insistently pure in their use of dialect.

That commitment to a language which opens us to a larger temporality than the one in which we think we dwell makes Garner an excellent re-teller of fairy tales. He has collections of British tales which are out of print (check your library) and several picture books which are still available, including *The Well of the Wind* (illustrated by Hervé Blondon, DK Ink, $14.95, 44 pp.) and *Once Upon a Time though it Wasn't in Your Time and it wasn't in my time and it wasn't in anybody else's time* (DK, $12.95, 29 pp.). The latter is felicitously illustrated by Norman Messenger, who visually underscores Garner's emphasis on repetition.

In all his work, Garner extends the reach of children's literature. In the essays, he argues that the rise of a separate sphere called children's literature has had spirit-wasting effects. It has put adults beyond the reach of myth and tales that they urgently need. And it has left children vulnerable to the didactic and the reductive in both literature and the teaching of literature. I recommend his essay collection not only for this persuasive dissent, but for the interest and intelligence with which Garner approaches subjects as various as Cheshire archeology, Welsh mythology, aboriginal theories of time, and his long struggle with manic depression.

Garner is England's great artist of place, and Joan Bodger is our most appreciative and insightful literary tourist. In 1958, this American storyteller and children's book reviewer (who had an English parent and who now resides in Canada) traveled to England with her

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historian husband and two young children to find and visit the sites (and even some authors) of their favorite children's books. *How the Heather Looks: A Joyous Journey to the British Sources of Children's Books* (McClelland & Stewart, $23.95, 249 pp.) is the result, an underground classic that has just come back into print.

The desire to see the real places in which the fictional Pooh, Rat, Mole, Squirrel Nutkin, and Puck wandered could easily descend into a dreadful literalism. But Bodger is a smart guide and a smart mother. She always shows and tells and enjoys in a way that nurtures, not confines, her children's imaginations. This is a multilayered narrative. Bodger provides a superlative guide to English children's books. She conveys the persistence and felicity at the heart of literary research. She gives a wonderfully detailed portrait of 1950s England, the open doors, lack of telephones, and local knowledge accrued by village inhabitants. And she shows what it is like to travel with an eight-year-old and a two-year-old (should I leave the latter sleeping in the car while I dash up to this castle with the other?).

One of my favorite scenes in *How the Heather Looks* is when an excited young librarian helps Bodger discover the site of T.H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1947), and an estate-sale handbill that details items which appear in this great classic. The novel has just come back into print (ACC Children's Classics, $24.95, 158 pp., age twelve and up), in an edition handsomely illustrated by Martin Hargreaves with a very welcome pictorial map of the Malplaquet estate on the endpapers. If you missed it the first time around, the novel involves a fetching young orphan named Maria, a wicked vicar and governess who are cheating her out of her estate, an absent-minded and wise professor, and wonder of wonders, a group of Lilliputians, related to those found by Gulliver. The writing is fabulous, as is the wry commentary on civics, authority, and children's education. This is the story of a girl coming into her power and learning how to manage it.

Were Bodger to go back to England today, I imagine she would put Garner on her "to visit" list as well as Philip Pullman, whose latest, *I Was a Rat!* (Knopf , $15.95, 163 pp., age eight and up) is, by turns, a disturbing, poignant, and farcical riff on the Cinderella story. *The Amber Spyglass,* his long-awaited conclusion to the trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, is officially "forthcoming," so if your favorite teenagers have not yet read *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife*, make sure they do. Bodger might also drop in on William Mayne, another contemporary English giant unknown here. His 1976 *A Year and a Day*, to which Pullman's rat is weirdly indebted, has just been republished in the lovely Candlewick Treasure series (illustrated by John Lawrence, $11.99, 126 pp., age eight and up). This is a gorgeous, lyrical story of an unearthly child who stays, for a year and a day, with a Cornish family that is mourning a deceased son and on the precipice of birthing a new one. It is an astonishingly subtle exploration of childhood consciousness, as embodied in the family's twin girls.

I have been neglecting picture books, and will mention a few new ones in closing. Allen Drummond's *Stories Told by Mother Teresa* (Element, $15.95, 24 pp., age three and up), is a good way to begin a conversation with your child about the works of mercy and global poverty. Drummond managed to translate *Moby-Dick* into a picture book without losing its edgy argument with God, so he is, unsurprisingly, very good here at capturing the Christian joy and hope at the heart of Mother Teresa. His always oddly scaled drawings are teeming with life and energy.

Benny's Had Enough, written by Swedish author Barbro Lindgren, and illustrated by Olof Landström (R & S Books, $14, ages two to six) finds a pig in rebellion against his fastidious mother. A toddler struggling against mom is not an innovative subject but it is an essential and inexhaustible one. Here it is given an especially fine treatment. I particularly liked the way the writer and artist integrate the artifacts of contemporary life (computers, cell phones, satellite dishes) without being cutesy. Landström draws in the economical and witty manner of James Marshall, Jules Feiffer, and William Steig—artists who know that less can be more.

Basket Moon (written by Mary Lyn Ray, Little Brown, $15.95) is Barbara Cooney's one hundred tenth, and final, picture book. Cooney (*Miss Rumphius, Eleanor, Island Boy*) died March 10, in Maine, at the age of eighty-three. Her illustrations for this story about a family of Taconic basket makers are historically detailed, technically graceful, and faithful to the emotional reserve of rural laborers. These values are hallmarks of Cooney's work. Her understatement and *gravitas* brought an emotional depth to picture books, and reach their apotheosis here. Look for the picture of the mother comforting her son, after he returns from his first trip to the city, having learned that the world regards him as a hick. In this picture, you can hear the silence, painful and reparative. □

Daria Donnelly *is* Commonweal*'s associate editor.*

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More than a gentleman painter

Fairfield Porter
A Life in Art
Justin Spring
Yale University Press, $35, 383 pp.

Donna Gustafson

Fairfield Porter (1907–75), Justin Spring argues in this new biography of the painter, art critic, and poet, has not been given his due and will not be appreciated until his work in all media—"an essentially diaristic project in which the artist perpetually sought to define his relation to the world"—is taken into account. This book makes an excellent start.

A good painter, an accomplished art critic, and a published poet, Porter maintained a stubborn allegiance to representational painting at a time when American art was deeply committed to abstract expressionism. This has always pushed him to the sidelines, but it also has enhanced a reading of Porter as a strong-minded painter who pursued his own artistic vision. At his best, he communicated a profound attachment to the here and now—an almost philosophic meditation on the nature of reality. He painted the emptiness of occupied rooms, objects left in disarray, moments between activities, and the silence of people alone and in groups.

Directly descended from the late-nineteenth-century domestic scenes of the French Intimist painters Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, which Porter first saw at an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1938 and admired all his life, his paintings are in a certain sense antimodern, as was Porter himself. Porter's antipathy to technology is a theme in Spring's book. He quotes a wonderful description of life in the Porter home by the poet Ron Padgett, who lived in the Porters' rambling colonial house in Southampton, Long Island, for several summers. Padgett speaks of stoking the coal stove that supplied the heat, winding the mechanical clocks, the lack of television, radio, and newspapers. In Porter's world there were the house and the ocean down the street. There was also the family house in Maine where Porter vacationed as a boy and where he took his own family as often as they could afford to go. These are the subjects of his paintings. In a sense, he reasserted the Victorian paradigm of the home as a place where art and domesticity reigned, separate and apart from the outside world of technology and commerce.

Porter was born into the sort of American family that Henry James portrayed in his fiction. His father managed the family's real estate holdings while indulging his own passions as an amateur architect and biologist. His mother, an intelligent and capable woman, published poetry and attended to the education of her children. Among the Porters' distinguished relatives was T.S. Eliot, with whom Fairfield seems to have had little contact. Fairfield's eldest brother, Eliot Porter, was a gifted and successful photographer who exhibited in the most acclaimed avant-garde art gallery in New York—Alfred Stieglitz's 291. Like his father and brothers before him, Fairfield attended Harvard. He later traveled to Europe, where he spent time in Italy with Bernard Berenson, visited the Soviet Union with a group of American socialists eager to explore the new society, and upon his return to the United States married the poet Anne Channing and moved to New York. Anne Channing Porter, who is still living and whose poems have appeared in the pages of this magazine, contributes much to this biography. Spring makes a virtue of necessity, quoting from her letters and conversations extensively. Her recollections and musings on the past enliven the facts that he uncovers and soften some of the criticisms aimed by family and old friends at the sometimes irascible Porter.

Although the first half of the book lacks a certain focus, the pace picks up as soon as Porter meets the poets who came to be known as the New York School. Spring's conversations with many of Porter's friends give him the ability to set Porter convincingly in the bohemian social ambience of New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He writes knowledgeably about poetry and does a good job of locating the essential character of Porter's art, art criticism, and verse in the orbit of Mallarmé, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, and Anne Porter. One of the most moving stories in the book concerns the triangular relationship among Fairfield,

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Anne, and James Schuyler, whom the Porters came to know in the mid-1950s. By then Porter, who had been writing art criticism for several years, had become friendly with Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, and the painters Jane Freilicher and Larry Rivers. Not unusually for the time and place, sexual preferences in this group were mixed. Porter, who had acknowledged his own bisexual yearnings years earlier, and Schuyler briefly became lovers with Anne Porter's knowledge. For years after the liaison ended, Schuyler, who was emotionally unstable, was supported both financially and emotionally by the Porters; he lived with them in their home on Long Island, and vacationed with them in Maine. This enabled him to write some of the best poetry of his career, but it was an enormous strain on the Porter family. Spring sensitively navigates through this terrain presenting the facts and letting the principals and friends speak through letters and reminiscences without attempting to simplify what was clearly a very complex relationship fraught with shades of parental responsibility, intellectual admiration, and sexual urges.

The book is not without faults. On occasion, repetitions and inconsistencies mar the flow of the narrative. There are also points where the author's lack of critical distance results in an overabundance of truly insignificant details (college grades), quotes from letters that say little of interest, and a tendency to try to protect Porter from the accusation that he was a gentleman painter. In fact, Porter never had to struggle with poverty; to suggest, as Spring does, that he suffered because of the exceptional circumstances that allowed him to paint without worrying about feeding a growing family (he and Anne Porter had five children), is to see the world askew. But these criticisms are small in light of the book's success. By intelligently exploring the artist's full range—his paintings, his criticism, his poetry, and his writings—Spring creates a fully rounded portrait of an important American painter who is still too often overlooked simply for his choice of subject. □

Donna Gustafson *is chief curator of exhibits at the American Academy of Arts.*

KILLING FOR A CAUSE

The Ultimate Terrorists
Jessica Stern
Harvard University Press, $22.95, 214 pp.

Inside Terrorism
Bruce Hoffman
Columbia University Press, $24.95, 288 pp.

James Finn

In the decade of the nineties, terrorists took the lives of American military personnel and civilians in a night club in Berlin, in barracks in Saudi Arabia, embassies in Africa, the World Trade Center in New York, and a federal building in Oklahoma City. These deaths received media attention in this country. They are the tip of an iceberg.

Jessica Stern records the growing number of terrorist attacks around the world since the 1970s, mounting in the first half of the '90s to 27,078 incidents, which caused 51,797 deaths and even more injuries. It is a serious and dangerous trend. How dangerous? Where does the trajectory extend? What defenses are possible and feasible? Both Stern and Bruce Hoffman stress the necessity and the difficulty of coping with these questions now.

It is a truism to say that terrorism has a bad name today. How could it be otherwise? But it was not always so. The term itself first gained wide modern acceptance after the French Revolution as the new government attempted to establish order during a period of near anarchy. Far from being directed against a government—as we generally expect it to be—the *régime de la terreur* was an instrument wielded by the state against those who opposed the revolution and longed for the *ancien régime*. Hoffman quotes Robespierre, the revolutionary leader: "Terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue." As we know, this emanation of virtue would in time cause Robespierre and his followers to lose their heads under the severe and inflexible blade of the guillotine. There would be little point in recalling this except that it prefigures contemporary terrorism. As Hoffman states: "The terrorist is fundamentally an altruist." That is, he does not act for personal gain: he is serving a cause. He believes he is acting virtuously for the good of some particular constituency. Without a cause, he is not a terrorist.

The books by Stern and Hoffman are complementary, agreeing on most major issues, but Hoffman offers the closer analysis of terrorism. He makes immediately clear, however, that one of the difficulties in discussing terrorism is that of definition. What is the particular combination of variables—what kinds of acts, intentions, agents, or targets—that sets acts of terrorism apart from other acts of violence? For these elements have shifted over the years, lending to terrorism a different form at different times, in different places.

During the nineteenth century, terrorists developed the concept of "propaganda by violence." Violence could do, they reasoned, what many conferences, many words had failed to do. These terrorists carefully targeted political leaders they saw as representatives of corrupt, oppressive societies. At the same time they regretted taking any human life and attempted to avoid injuring anyone other than the target. During this period, terrorism became closely associated with revolution, a linkage that still exists in the minds of many people. In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, terror was adopted by totalitarian governments—Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Communist Russia—to repress their opponents and intimidate their own citizens. As Hermann Göring wrote to his "fellow Germans" in 1933:

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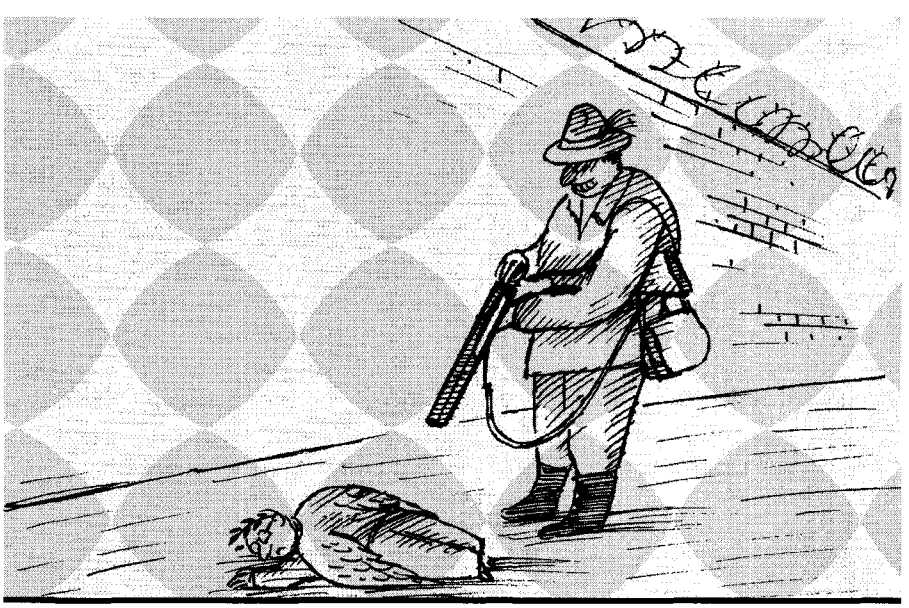
"I don't have to worry about justice; my mission is only to destroy and intimidate." In following decades, terror became a prominent feature of military dictatorships in Latin American countries. Hoffman distinguishes: Internal violent acts sanctioned by those already in power are "generally termed 'terror' in order to distinguish that phenomenon from 'terrorism,' which is understood to be violence committed by nonstate entities."

With such distinctions in place he is ready to offer a definition of terrorism—in which each term is crucial—as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change." Consonant with this definition is Brian Jenkins's observation that terrorists do not want to alienate those whom they wish to influence, hence their concern to limit damage. "Terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead."

While questioning whether terrorists do act with deliberation, whether they really engage in cost-benefit analysis, Stern quotes Thomas Schelling: "Despite the high ratio of damage and grief to the resources required for a terrorist act, terrorism has proved to be a remarkably ineffectual means to accomplishing anything." And it is easy to point to the demise of a number of terrorist groups that have gradually faded from the political scene without accomplishing their purposes. The Baader-Meinhof Group of Germany and the Red Brigades of Italy come to mind. Why would other groups wish to follow their example?

These are reassuring observations, but there are others that are not, and I think they are weightier. For example, Algeria, Kenya, Cyprus, and Israel all won independence partly through the aid of terrorism. Ineffectual? Groups bent on "national liberation" could well look to them for guidance. In fact the Palestinians did. In a short time, the terrorist acts of the Palestinian Liberation Organization did what years of international lobbying had failed to accomplish: they focused world attention on the Palestinian people and their plight. (Definition again: Yassir Arafat insisted on a distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters, the latter seeking freedom, liberty, and a just cause. No need to say where he placed the PLO. Today other groups would like to make the same exchange of labels.)

More disturbing are these growing phenomena: the part played by religion-inspired groups, cults, and political extremists, and the extension of terrorism beyond the borders of the nationals' own country. The newer activists have little interest in limiting the damage they do. In some instances the reverse will be true. The bombing of the World Trade Center is a case in point. Investigators believe that Islamic extremists intended to bring one of the twin towers down so that it would severely damage the other and to release poisonous gas into the area, killing many thousands.



Another example is the release of deadly nerve gas into the Japanese subway system by Aum Shinrikyo, a religious sect. Stern is particularly strong on describing the variety of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, chemical, and biological—now available to such terrorists, and the relative ease of international travel that allows them to strike where they will. She rightly calls for preparatory measures and outlines a possible course of preventive action. She does sometimes weaken her strong arguments by an excessive reliance on "probably could" and "might," the latter term appearing eleven times on one page alone. Nor are her secondary sources always reliable. For instance, she cites a supposed statistic that during World War II between 75 and 80 percent of riflemen refused to fire at an exposed enemy, a "statistic" first put forth by General S.L.A. Marshall but subsequently disproved. But these are minor flaws in a strong and chilling argument.

"Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers." This grim prediction comes not from Stern or Hoffman but from a report issued by a federal advisory commission in late September. It follows from preceding findings that the greatest present threat to American security is posed not by a conventional conflict but by terrorist attacks for which we are currently unprepared. In mid-October, in a rare unanimous vote, the Security Council of the UN agreed to unite in a common defense against terrorism. Representatives of the council forcefully rejected the contention that because some terrorist acts are labeled political or said to be in a "just cause" they are less than reprehensible.

These government actions underscore the value of these two books, which occasionally overlap and sometimes differ. Each is a distinct and forceful call for more intensive national concern about terrorist attacks—possibly catastrophic—and for preventive measures to forestall them. □

James Finn *is a member of the board of World without War Council.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

living in a backroom of Holy Name Cathedral. Out the window he could see unemployed men going through garbage cans to search for food. That image disturbed and challenged him to relate his research on the Mystical Body to suffering humanity. The key question was: How does the gospel relate to the social order? This was ten years *before* Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical on the Mystical Body (1943).

In 1968, I was invited to give a mission talk at Sacred Heart Church, Hillenbrand's parish. He told me the Mass schedule was such that I should not speak longer than ten minutes. At one of the Masses, the celebrant arrived twenty minutes late; I adjusted and spoke no more than two minutes. But when I came off the altar, Hillenbrand gave me a tongue lashing for going on so long. I was stunned. Later, after all the Masses, he came to me and humbly apologized. He had found out that the Mass in question was late because of the celebrant, not my long-windedness.

I appreciate Hillenbrand's vision and contributions in theology, liturgy, lay formation, social justice, and the role of the priest. However, it is his spirit of humility that remains with me.

(REV.) ROBERT M. KEARNS, S.S.J.
Baltimore, Md.

The writer is the superior general of the Josephites.

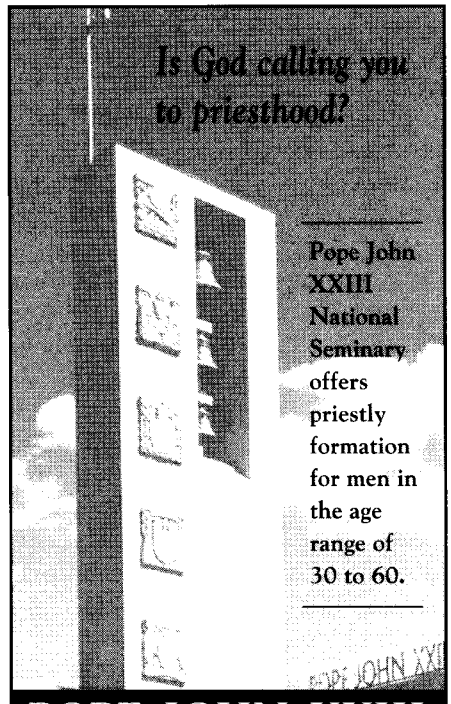
Serving Hillenbrand

In 1966, I was an altar boy at Sacred Heart Church in Winnetka, Illinois where Reynold Hillenbrand was the pastor. My family moved away the following year, but, in the decades since, I've occasionally stumbled upon a reference to him and his legacy in a book or article—just enough to make me wonder if this was the same person I knew when I was a kid. Reading the accounts of his life by John Hill and Barry Hillenbrand in your March 10 issue was like discovering a couple of missing puzzle pieces in the attic. They confirmed for me that this was a man I was lucky to have known—even as a grade-schooler.

I recall that he wrote out his sermons, and it was clear he put a lot of time into them. He was encouraging enough to guide me into lectoring at crowded Sunday morning Masses, even though I was only twelve.

One not-so-hazy memory, however, stands out from the rest. Once while helping him vest in the sacristy before Mass, as Hillenbrand was facing away, his alb on, hands cupped in the small of his back, waiting for me to hand him the cincture, I hesitated. For whatever reason, I couldn't remember whether the tassels should be on the left or the right. I guess I took a little too long because he suddenly turned around with a steely glare and said, "Give it to me!" and snatched it out of my hands in a flash. I retreated like a wounded puppy dog and went on to serve the Mass.

Afterward, as I was getting ready to leave, he called me over to him in the sacristy, put his arm around my shoul-



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On-line discussion group

Commonweal will be sponsoring an e-mail discussion group from now until July 1, 2000. The group will exchange messages dealing with articles and topics presented in the magazine. To join, simply send an e-mail message to *commonweal-subscribe@egroups.com*

Happy e-mailing!

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der and simply said, "I was unkind to you before Mass and I apologize for that. I wasn't feeling well."

It was a lesson in honesty and humility that has stayed with me nearly thirty-five years.

BOB MCCABE
Chesapeake, Va.

A great and saintly man

Thank you to John Hill and to Barry Hillenbrand [March10] for their finely wrought remembrances of the late Reynold Hillenbrand. As the first director (1992–94) of the Reynold Hillenbrand Institute, now at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, I was blessed with the opportunity to know better countless persons touched by this great and saintly man.

John Hill's account of Hillenbrand ended, as a number (McClory, Avella, Frisbie/Egan) have, with the oft-told tale of John J. Egan meeting Hillenbrand prior to his death and gaining from Hillenbrand some degree of validation for Egan's point of view. This final meeting between Egan and Hillenbrand has taken on undue weight and has been used to mark the passing of a tradition to Egan.

There is another school of thought, however, among those few friends of Hillenbrand who, unlike Egan, openly backed Hillenbrand's defense of *Humanae vitae* in 1968, and who do not view Egan as anything near the full heir of Hillenbrand. Part of my work at the Hillenbrand Institute was to try to bring these two groups together. If there ever is a schism in the Catholic church in America, I fear it will follow this fault line outward from the old Hillenbrand circle.

The year 2004 will mark the centenary of Reynold Hillenbrand's birth. It is time to give serious consideration to the beatification of a man who, as another disciple, the late Daniel Cantwell, eulogized, combined a love of justice, liturgy, learning, Catholic social teaching, beauty, work, and might I add, of life. This communion of loves can not only prevent schism, but can renew both our laity and clergy as we join in love's common pursuit.

ALBERT J. SCHORSCH III
Chicago, Ill.

Flaming liberals

Having been a *Commonweal* subscriber for only one year, I have been impressed by the quality of the writing, both in the essays and in the Correspondence section. I have also been struck by some of the flaming liberalism of the content. I choose the word "flaming" for the "causes" and the ready solutions that spring up like flaming balls from a Roman Candle.

Take Carlos Lozada's commentary on debt relief [February 25]. Here is a plea for not just debt relief to the poorest nations, but a request to raise the bar of definition of poverty so that the countries of South America qualify. Lozada cites the skewed income patterns of Latin America as the worst in the world, with the result that average income is too high for debt relief and leaves the poor bearing the results of the debt burden.

Rather than throw debt relief funds at countries, it might be useful to comment as to how this income gap came about and how it might be relieved. Why not look at the differences in the cultures and intellectual thought in Latin America and the United States during the last four hundred years to see if therein lies the birth of today's problems? Such understanding might bring real solutions.

DONALD LUND
Stoughton, Wisc.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Eric Stoltz

Proposition 22, the California state initiative banning recognition of same-sex marriage, passed last month by a margin of 61 to 39 percent. I was not surprised. The week before the vote, I had driven to my mother's house to help her pack for a move. As I drove through the small, middle-class enclave of Duarte, I was confronted with a sea of lawn signs reading: "Protect Marriage: Yes on 22."

Despite the fact that there was a presidential primary at stake and numerous other important ballot initiatives, only Proposition 22 seemed to have prompted bold declarations on lawn after lawn. Living in the city, I had never seen a "Yes on 22" lawn sign. For me, a gay man, the air in Duarte was thick with unwelcome. I sped through the streets anxious to get to where I was going and leave as quickly as possible.

But as I pulled up to my mother's house, my heart began pumping. There, on her lawn, was a sign proclaiming "Yes on 22." I felt humiliated and betrayed. I parked in the driveway, pulled up the sign, walked in, and asked, "Mom, is this sign on your lawn by mistake?"

"No mistake," she replied.

"Well then, I'm going home," I responded. On the way back to Los Angeles, my mind and heart raced. I thought of the fact that marriage between two people of the same sex was already illegal in California and how, as far as I was concerned, Proposition 22 had been developed as a catalyst to pit citizen against citizen on the issue of civil rights for lesbians and gay men. As a Catholic, I know that the sacrament of matrimony, theologically, can be contracted only between a man and a woman. But civil marriage, I would argue, is different, more a question of individual rights than majority rule.

I could, for example, fly to Las Vegas tonight, wed a prostitute in a drunken stupor, and return to Los Angeles tomorrow morning to have my marriage fully recognized by the law and society. Fifty women can vie on national television to marry a man they've never met for his money, and that union would be recognized by the state. Any man can marry a woman for her looks in a cynical but legally sanctioned form of concubinage, and that union would enjoy all the rights and privileges of marriage. But if two people of the same sex want to establish rights of inheritance or become legally empowered to make health-care decisions for one another, we are now told that the entire structure of Western civilization will come crashing down. The threat is so dire that California's Catholic bishops spent nearly $300,000 in support of Proposition 22. I understand some of the reasoning behind the bishops' actions. I also note that many civil marriages between straight people are not recognized by the church, yet I do not see bishops proposing initiatives that would ban such unions.

A thought crossed my mind. Let's say I thought divorce—rather than gays and lesbians—was the real threat to the idea of marriage. I could then propose to amend, through popular initiative, the same sentence inserted into the California Family Code by Proposition 22, adding just six words: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized, *and every valid marriage is indissoluble.*" Would I encounter a sea of lawn signs in Duarte proclaiming marriage's indissolubility? Could I expect my bishop to support the civil codification of the church's understanding of marriage in this instance? Or would churches beg off the idea of settling such a sensitive issue at the ballot box? Why do I suspect that the real-life needs of the majority would somehow be accommodated on this question?

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After I got home and returned the inevitable message from my mother (yes, I should have sat down and talked with her about it, but I am not perfect), I proposed my scenario to her: "Would you not be offended if you came to my home and saw a banner hanging from my balcony urging the abolition of divorce?" She is divorced. "No," she said. "That wouldn't bother me at all."

I wonder. For you see, it is not that everyone in the gay community believes we can contract matrimony as a sacrament. I don't. But I am irked by the double standard in civil life. Divorce, adultery, and marriage for inappropriate reasons are all permitted in a pluralistic society. Why are gay unions so threatening, when immense leeway is routinely permitted in straight people's ideas of what marriage entails? This can even be seen as an issue of free exercise of religion. If some in the Reform movement of Judaism and in the Episcopal church can permit same-sex marriages, should the California electorate have the right to deny civil recognition to such unions?

In civil law the idea of marriage has changed radically from the days when divorce was the exception and interracial unions illegal. Most Americans, I suspect, believe that individuals, not the community as a whole, should define what marriage means. But if straight people enjoy that right, why can't gay people? □

Eric Stoltz *is a consultant in public relations and Web development in Los Angeles.*

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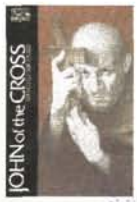

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